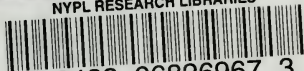


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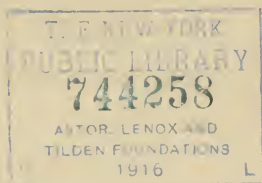
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P R E F A C E .

THE following Essays contain the substance of some Discourses not originally designed for the Press, but which I was strongly urged to publish by several of the persons to whom the Volume is inscribed.

I have endeavoured to throw the materials into a form more suited for private perusal than that of the Discourses originally delivered. I fear, however, that, in consequence of frequent interruptions during the preparation of the work for the Press, some defects may be found in the arrangement and comparative development of the several topics, and other such imperfections in the composition, which can only

be effectually guarded against by means of a period of unbroken leisure beyond what I can ever reasonably expect.

But whatever may be thought of the Work as a Composition, I trust that, in respect of the *matter* of it, the reader will give me credit for being incapable of putting forth, on subjects so important, any views that have not been carefully considered.

In fact, among the subjects here treated of are some on which I have not only reflected much, but have written and published from time to time for about twelve years past.

And it may not be impertinent here to remark, that in respect of some most important points now maintained, I may appeal (besides the arguments contained in the following pages) to the strongest of all external confirmations, the testimony of opponents. Not that I have ever written in a polemical form, or sought to provoke controversy; but by opponents, I mean, those who have maintained, and who still maintain, opinions opposite to those I have put forth; but who have never, to the best of my knowledge, even attempted any refutation of the reasons I have adduced.

For instance, that the introduction into the Christian Religion of Sacrifices and Sacrificing Priests is utterly at variance with the whole System of the Gospel, and destructive of one of its most important characteristics; and, again, that the implicit deference due to the declarations and precepts of Holy Scripture, is due to *nothing else*, and that it is not humble piety, but profane presumption, either to attribute infallibility to the traditions or decision of any uninspired Man or Body of men, (whether Church, Council, Fathers, or by whatever other title designated,) or, still more, to acknowledge in these, *although fallible*, a right to fix absolutely the interpretation of Scripture, to be blended therewith, and to supersede all private judgment,—these are positions which I have put forth, from time to time, for many years past, in various forms of expressions, and supported by a variety of arguments, in several different works, some of which have appeared in more than one edition. And though opposite views are maintained by many writers of the present day, several of them professed members of the Church of England, I have

never seen even an attempted refutation of any of those arguments.

It cannot be alleged that they are not worth noticing: since, whether intrinsically weak or strong, the reception they have met with from the Public indicates their having had some influence.

And again, if any one is averse to entering into controversy, and especially personal controversy (a feeling with which I cordially sympathize), this would not compel him to leave wholly unnoticed all the arguments that can be urged against his views. It would be absurd to speak as if there were no medium between, on the one hand, engaging in a controversy, and, on the other hand, passing over without any notice at all, every thing that ever has been, or may be, urged on the opposite side. Nothing is easier, or more common, and, I should add, nothing more advisable, than to notice in *general* terms the opinions or arguments opposed to one's own, and without reference to any particular book or author: as by saying, for instance, "Such and such a doctrine has been held;"—"this or that may be alleged;"—"some persons may object so and so," &c. In this way,

not only personal controversy may be avoided, without undue neglect of what may be said on the opposite side, but also the advantage is gained (to the cause of truth, I mean) of confining the reader's attention to the real merits of the case, independently of the extraneous circumstances,^a which ought not to influence the decision.

It is true, no one should be required to notice every minor objection,—every difficulty relative to points of detail,—that may be alleged against any principle or system he is contending for ; since there may be even valid objections against each of two opposite conclusions.^b But this does not affect the present case ; the arguments I am alluding to, having relation to *fundamental principles*. Whatever any one may think of the soundness of those arguments, no one can doubt that, if admitted, they go to prove that the system contended against is (not merely open to objections, but) radically wrong throughout ; based on false assumptions, supported by none but utterly falla-

^a Ἐξω τοῦ πράγματος, Arist. Rhet.

^b See Logic, B. iii. § 17.

cious reasoning, and leading to the most pernicious consequences.

And these arguments, though it is not for me to say that they are unanswerable, have certainly been hitherto, as far as I know, wholly unanswered, even by those who continue to advocate opposite conclusions.

Should it be asked why they do not either abandon those conclusions, or else attempt a refutation of the reasons urged against them, *that* is evidently not a question for me, but for them, to answer. Else, an answer is not unlikely to occur to some minds, in the words of the homely proverb, "he that's convinced against his will, is of his own opinion still."

It is only, however, in reference to the subject-matter itself of the question under discussion—to the intrinsic soundness of the conclusions advocated—that the opinions and procedure of individuals can be worth the attention of the general reader. All that I wish to invite notice to, is, the confirmation that is afforded to the conclusiveness of arguments to which no answer is attempted, even by those who continue to maintain doctrines at variance with them.

All that has been said in reference to the positions above alluded to (which are among those maintained in the second of these Essays) will apply equally to some of those maintained in the first Essay : for instance, that to attempt the propagation or support of Gospel-truth by secular force, or by establishing in behalf of Christians, as such, a monopoly of civil rights, is utterly at variance with the true character of Christ's Kingdom, and with the teaching and practice of Himself and his Apostles ; and that to attribute to them any such design, is to impugn their character, not merely as inspired Messengers from Heaven, but even as sincere and upright men.

These conclusions have been maintained by arguments which have been as long before the Public as the others above alluded to, and have remained equally unanswered.

If in these, or in any other points, I am in error, I trust I shall be found open to conviction whenever my errors shall be pointed out. In the meantime, I trust I shall not be thought to have been unprofitably employed, in endeavoring more fully to elucidate, and to confirm by

additional arguments, what appear to me to be momentous truths, and in developing some of the most important of the practical conclusions which result from them.

ESSAY I.

ON

CHRIST'S OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS PERSON,

AND OF

THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM AS SET FORTH

AT HIS TWO TRIALS.

Οὐδὲ ἐυρέθη ΔΟΛΟΣ ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ.

ESSAY I.

§ 1. To any one who is convinced of the divine origin of the Christian Religion,—who is satisfied that what is called in Scripture “The Kingdom of Heaven” does really deserve that title,—and who is inquiring into the personal character of its Founder, and into the nature of that Kingdom which He proclaimed and established, the most obvious and natural course would seem to be, to appeal, in the first instance, to that Founder Himself, and to consider what account He gave of his own character and that of his kingdom. For to believe Him sent from God, is to believe him incapable of either deceiving or being deceived, as to these points. He must have understood both his own personal nature, and the principles of the religion He was divinely commissioned to introduce. Having

Christ's own
account of
Himself and
his kingdom,
the first in-
quiry.

a full reliance therefore both on his unerring knowledge, and his perfect veracity, our first inquiry should be, as I have said (without any disparagement of other sources of instruction) into the accounts He gave of Himself and his religion; both in the various discourses which He delivered and declarations which He made, on sundry occasions, and, most especially, on the great and final occasion of his being tried and condemned to death.

Christ tried
twice.

We collect from the sacred historians that He underwent *two* trials, before two distinct tribunals, and on charges totally different; that on the one occasion He was found guilty, and on the other, acquitted; and that ultimately He was put to death under the one Authority in compliance with the condemnation which had been pronounced by the other.

Trial before
the Sanhe-
drim first,
and then be-
fore Pilate.

He was tried first before the Sanhedrim, (the Jewish Council) "for blasphemy," and pronounced "guilty of death:" before the Roman governor, Pilate, (and probably before Herod also,) He was tried for rebellion, in setting up pretensions subversive of the existing Government, and was pronounced not guilty. The Jewish ruler had the will, but not the power, to inflict capital punishment on Him; Pilate had the power, and not the will. But though he "found no fault in Him," he was ultimately prevailed on by the

Jews to inflict *their* sentence of death. “*We^a* have a law,” they urged, “and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”

Of this most interesting and important portion of the sacred narrative many persons, I believe, have a somewhat indistinct and confused notion; partly from the brevity, scantiness and indeed incompleteness, of each of the four narratives, when taken alone; each evangelist recording, it may be supposed, such circumstances, as he was the most struck with, and had seen or heard the most of: and partly, again, from the commonly prevailing practice of reading the Scripture-histories irregularly and in detached fragments, taken indiscriminately and without any fixed object, out of different books.^b

This indistinctness a reader of ordinary intelligence may I think very easily clear away, by attentively studying and *comparing together* all the four accounts that have come down to us: and he will then find that this portion of the history so examined, will throw great

^a Ἡμεῖς is expressed in the original.

^b The whole of the *New Testament* is read in this irregular mode, in the Second Lessons appointed in our Service; as these are appointed in reference to the day of the month only; and it is consequently a matter of chance which of them shall fall on Sunday. This is one of the imperfections which a Church-government, if we had one, would not fail to remedy. See Appendix to the Second Essay.

light on some of the most important points of Gospel-truth;—on those two great questions especially which were alluded to in the outset, as to the fundamental character of “the kingdom of Heaven,” and the person of its Founder.

Application
of the Jews
to Pilate for
infliction of
capital pun-
ishment.

§ 2. When the Jewish Rulers and People were clamorously demanding the death of Jesus under sentence of the Roman Authorities, and Pilate in answer declared that before his—the Roman-tribunal, no crime had been proved, saying, “Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law,” his intention evidently was that no heavier penalty should be inflicted than the scourging which was the utmost that the Jewish Authorities were permitted to inflict. But they replied that the crime of which they had convicted Him, was, by their law, *capital*, while yet they were restricted by the Romans from inflicting capital punishment; (“it is not lawful for *us* to put any man to death”) on which ground accordingly they called on the Governor to execute the capital sentence of their Court.

Pilate's mo-
tives for
yielding.

Their clamors prevailed, through Pilate's apprehension of a tumult,^c and

^c It seems to have been not unusual for the Roman Governors of Provinces to endeavour thus to prevent, or mitigate, or cut short, any tumult *not directed against the Roman power itself*, by yield-

of himself incurring suspicions of disloyalty towards the Emperor; which they had endeavoured to awaken by crying out that "if he let this man go, he was not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." But this was only brought forward as a plea to influence Pilate. The trial before the Jewish Council had nothing to do with the Roman Emperor, but was for "blasphemy," because "He made Himself the Son of God."

It is important, therefore, to inquire,—since this phrase may conceivably bear more than one meaning,—in what sense it was understood by those who founded on it the sentence of death.

In a certain sense all mankind may be called children of God.^d In a more especial manner,—in a higher sense,—those are often called his children whom He has from time to time chosen to be his "peculiar

Meanings
of the ex-
pression,
Son of God.

God's Elect
People
called Sons.

ing to the wishes of the populace, however unreasonable, or conniving at their disorders. A sort of compromise was thus made with the most turbulent and violent among them; who, provided they made no attempt to throw off the yoke of a foreign Power, were permitted to sacrifice a fellow-citizen to their lawless fury. Thus Gallio at Corinth left the rioters to settle their own disputes as they would: (Acts xviii.) and the magistrates at Phillippi readily and spontaneously gratified the populace by seconding and sanctioning their unjust violence. Pilate on this occasion did so, tardily and reluctantly.

^d (Acts xvii.) . . . "for we are also his children."

People,"—to have his will revealed to them, and his offers of especial favour set before them. Such were the Israelites of old (to whom the title of Son is accordingly assigned by the Lord himself, *Exod. iv. 22*), as being the chosen or "Elect" People of God, called from among all the nations of the world to receive direct communications, and especial blessings from their Heavenly Father. And the like privilege of peculiar "Sonship," (only in a far higher degree,) was extended afterwards to all nations who should embrace the Gospel; "who aforetime" (says the Apostle Peter) "were not a People, but now are the People of God." And Paul uses like expressions continually in addressing his converts, whether they walked worthy of their high calling or not.

Yet again, still more especially, those who do avail themselves of the privileges offered to them, and "walk as Children of the light," are spoken of as, in another and a superior way, the "Sons" of Him whom they love and submit to as a Father: "as many," says Paul, "as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God."

Prophets
and others
supernatu-
rally en-
dowed.

Those Patriarchs, and Prophets again, to whom of old God revealed Himself immediately, and made them the means of communication between Himself and other men,—his messengers to his Peo-

ple,—and endowed with miraculous powers as the credentials of a heavenly embassy,—to such men, as having a peculiar kind of divine presence with them, we might conceive the title of Children of God to be applicable in a different sense, as distinguishing them from uninspired men.

Now it is a most important practical question whether Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith,—He to whom we are accustomed emphatically to apply the title of “*the Son of God*,”—was so designated, in the Angel’s first announcement, and on so many occasions afterwards, merely as being an inspired messenger from heaven, or in some different and higher sense ; and what that higher sense is.

§ 3. And first, that Jesus is spoken of in Scripture as the Son of God, in some different sense from any other person, is evident at once from the very circumstance of his being styled “the only-begotten Son ;” which title is particularly dwelt on when He is speaking of Himself, (John iii.) This is a further stage in the revelation given ; for the Angel had not told Mary that He should be “*the Son of God*,” (though it is so rendered in our version) but only “*a Son of God*,” *υἱὸς Θεοῦ*.

I need not multiply the citations of passages of which so many must be familiar to every one

Revelations
made on the
occasion of
the Trans-
figuration.

even tolerably well-read in the New-Testament. But there is one that is peculiarly worthy of attention, on account of the care which divine Providence then displayed in guarding the disciples against the mistake of supposing Jesus to be merely one—though the most eminent one—of the prophets. In the transfiguration “on the Mount,” three favoured Apostles beheld their Master surrounded with that dazzling supernatural light which had always been to the Israelites the sign of a divine manifestation, and which we find so often mentioned in the Old Testament as the Glory of the Lord—the Shechinah ;—which appeared on Mount Sinai,—on the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, in Solomon’s Temple, &c. : and they beheld at the same time, in company with Him, two persons, each of whom had been seen in their lifetime accompanied by this outward mark of supernatural light ; Moses, their great lawgiver, whose “face shone when he came down from Mount Sinai, so that the Israelites could not fix their eyes on it, and Elias (Elijah), their most illustrious Prophet, who was seen borne away from the earth in that Shechinah appearing as a “chariot and horses of fire :” and now, these same two persons were seen along with Jesus. It might naturally have occurred to the three disciples (perhaps some such idea was indicated by the

incoherent words which dropped from them)—the thought might have occurred to them,—were Moses and Elias also Emmanuels?—were all three, manifestations of “God dwelling with his people?” and was Jesus merely the greatest of the three? To correct, as it should seem, any such notion, it was solemnly announced to them that their Master was a Being of a different character from the others: “there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is *my beloved Son*: hear *Him*.” And on two other occasions we read of the same signs being given.

§ 4. No one can doubt then, that those who believed in Jesus at all, must have believed Him to be the Son of God in a far different and superior sense from that in which any other could be so called. But what *was* the sense, it may be asked, in which they did understand the title? Did the people of that time and country understand that God was with Him, not only in some such way as He never was with any other man, but so as to permit and require *divine worship* to be addressed to God in Christ? Many passages by which this tenet is supported are commonly cited from the Evangelists and Apostles; but I wish at present to confine myself to the expression “the Son of God,” and

Whether
Jesus was
the Son of
God in a
sense au-
thorizing
adoration.

to inquire in what sense *that* was understood at the time.

Metaphysical disquisitions on abstruse scholastic terms, unnecessary.

Waiving then all abstruse disquisition on the notions conveyed by such terms as “ consubstantiality,”—“ personality,”—“ hypostatic-union,”—“ eternal filiation,” and the like, (oftener I conceive debated about with eagerness than clearly understood,) let us confine ourselves to such views as we may presume the Apostles to have laid before the converts they were instructing; who were most of them plain unlearned persons, to whom such abstruse disquisitions as I have been alluding to, must have been utterly unintelligible; but who, nevertheless, were called on,—all of them, of whatever age, sex, station, and degree of intellectual education,—to receive the Gospel, and to believe, and feel, and act, as that Gospel enjoined.

There is one great practical point clearly intelligible to all, thus far, at least, that they can understand what the question is that is under discussion, and which it is, and ever must have been, needful to bring before all Christians without exception: viz. whether there is that divine character in the Lord Jesus which entitles Him to our *adoration*:—whether He is the Son of God in such a sense as to authorize those who will worship none but the one God, to

worship Jesus Christ. So that “all men^e should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.”

Now there is a maxim relative to the right interpretation of any passage of Scripture, so obvious when stated, that it seems strange it should be so often overlooked: viz. to consider *in what sense the words were understood by the generality of the persons they were addressed to*: and to keep in mind that the *presumption* is in favour of that, as the true sense, unless reasons to the contrary shall appear.

Christ's words to be taken in the sense understood at the time.

Some are accustomed to consider, what sense such and such words can be *brought to bear*; or how *we* should be most naturally inclined to understand them: but it is evident that the point we have to consider—if we would understand aright what it is that God did design to reveal,—is, the sense (as far as we can ascertain it) which the very hearers of Christ and his Apostles did *actually* attach to their words. For we may be sure that if this was, in any case, a *mistaken* sense, a correction of the mistake (if it relate to any important practical point) will be found in some part of the Sacred Writings.

However strange therefore it may seem to any one that the phrase “Son of God” should

^e John v. 23.

have been so understood as it was at the time, and however capable of another sense it may appear to us, still, the sense which Jesus and his Apostles meant to convey, must have been that,—whatever it was—in which they *knew that their hearers understood them.*

And what this meaning was, may I think be settled even by the testimony of his adversaries alone, as to the sense in which *they* understood Him. They charged Him, not only on his trial, but on many other occasions also, with “blasphemy,” as “making Himself God,”—“making Himself equal with God;” and threatened to “stone Him,” according to the law of Moses against blasphemers; understanding blasphemy to comprehend the crime of enticing the People to worship any besides the one true God, Jehovah.^f

Christ
would have
warned his
hearers
against a
mistake as
to his
meaning.

Now if they had *misunderstood* his words, and had supposed his language to imply a claim to such divine honour as He did *not* really mean to claim, we may be sure that any one—I do not say merely, any inspired messenger from Heaven, but—any man of common integrity, would at once have disavowed the imputation, and explained his real meaning. If any Christian ministers, in these days, or at any time, were to have used some expression which they found was under-

^f See Deut. xiii.

stood,—either by friends or foes,—as implying a claim to divine worship, what would they not deserve, if they did not hasten to disclaim such a meaning?

And much more would this be requisite in the case of a person who foresaw (as Jesus must have done) that his followers *would* regard Him as divine,—*would* worship Him—if He did not expressly warn them against it. Such a one would be doubly bound to make such explanations and such disavowals as should effectually guard his disciples against falling into the error—through any thing said or done by Himself—of paying adoration to a Being not divine: even as the Apostle Peter warns the Centurion Cornelius against the adoration which he suspected that Cornelius designed to offer him; saying, “Stand up, I myself also am a man.” Jesus of course would have taken care to give a like warning, if He had been conscious of not having a claim to be considered as divine, and had at the same time been aware that the title of Son of God would be understood as implying that claim.

That the title *was* so understood, is the point to which I am now calling the reader's attention.

§ 5. On one occasion when He had healed a cripple on the Sabbath-day, and had commanded him immediately

Christ must have foreseen that his followers would pay him divine honours.

Jesus understood to claim a divine character.

to "take up his bed" (which was a work prohibited by the Jewish law) He vindicates Himself against his opponents by saying "My Father worketh hitherto,^g and I work;" or, as it might be rendered more clearly according to our modern usage, "My Father has been working up to this time;" (that is, ever since the creation, the operations of God have been going on throughout the Universe, on all days alike;) "and I work;" I claim the right to perform, and to authorize others to perform, whatever and whenever I see fit. "Therefore the Jews" (says the Evangelist) "sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his [proper] Father; *making Himself equal with God.*"^h

On another occasion (John x. 32) when he had said "I and the Father are one," the Jews were about to stone Him for blasphemy," because (said they) thou being a man makest thyself God." He defends Himself by alleging a passage of their Scripture in which the title of "God" is applied to those, "to whom the word of God

Defence of
Jesus when
charged
with blas-
phemy by
the popu-
lace.

^g Ἐργάζεται ἕως ἄρτι.

^h Our version, it is important to observe, does not give the full force of the passage as it stands in the Original. It should be rendered, "that God was his *own proper* (or *peculiar*) Father" (πατέρα ἰδίον). This it seems was the sense in which (according to the Evangelist) He was understood by his hearers to call God his Father, and Himself "the Son of God."

came ;” implying however at the same time a *distinction* between Himself and those persons, and his own *superiority* to them : “ Say ye of Him” (He does not say “ to whom the word of God came”—but) “ whom the Father hath anointed and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God ?” *This* however did not necessarily imply any thing more than *superiority* and *divine mission* ; and accordingly *we find the Jews enduring it* ; but when he goes on to say “ that ye may know and believe that *the Father is in me, and I in him,*” we find them immediately *seeking again to lay hands on Him* ; and He withdraws from them.

But the most important record by far in respect of the point now before us His defence before the Council. is that which I originally proposed to notice,—the account of our Lord’s trial and condemnation before the Jewish Council. In order to have a clear view of this portion of the history, it is necessary to keep in mind, that when He was tried before the Roman Governor, it was (as I observed at the beginning) not for the same crime he was charged with before the Council of the Jews ; but for seditious and treasonable designs against the *Roman Emperor* : “ We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He himself is Christ a King.” “ Whosoever maketh Himself a King, speaketh

against Cæsar." Now I need hardly remark that this was no crime under the law of *Moses*; and would in fact have been a merit in the sight of most of the Jews. But what He was charged with before *them*, was blasphemy, according to the Law of Moses;ⁱ and of this they pronounced Him guilty, and sentenced Him to death; but not having power to inflict capital punishment they prevailed on Pilate, who had acquitted Him of the charge of treason, to inflict their sentence: "We have a law, and by *our law* He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

Accounts of
the trial, in
the four
Gospels, to
be com-
pared to-
gether.

In order to understand clearly the trial and condemnation of our Lord before the Jewish Council (which is in many respects a most important part of Sacred History) we should study, as I have said, the accounts given of it by all four of the Evangelists. Each relates such circumstances as most struck his own mind; where one is abridged, another is more diffuse; each omits some things that are noticed by another; but no one can be supposed to have recorded any thing that did *not* occur. All the four, therefore, should be compared together, in order to obtain a clear view of the transaction.

Jesus con-
victed on
his own tes-
timony.

It seems to have been divinely appointed that Jesus should be con-

ⁱ See Deut. xiii. 7.

victed on no testimony but *his own* ; perhaps in order to fulfil the more emphatically his declaration “No man taketh away my life, but I lay it down of myself.” For the witnesses brought forward to misrepresent and distort his saying “Destroy this temple,” into “*I will destroy,*” could not make their evidence agree.

The High Priest then endeavoured, by examining Jesus Himself, to draw from Him an acknowledgment of his supposed guilt. He and the others appear to have asked Him *two* questions ; which, in the more abridged narrative of Matthew and Mark, are compressed into one sentence ; but which Luke has given distinctly as two. After having asked Him, “Art thou *the Christ* ?” they proceed to ask further, “Art thou then the *Son of God* ?”^k and soon as He had answered *this last* question in the affirmative (according to the Hebrew idiom “Ye say,” “Thou hast said”) immediately “the High Priest rent his clothes,” saying, “He hath spoken blasphemy : ye have heard the blasphemy ; what need we any further witness ? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.”

Two questions asked before the Council.

§ 6. Some readers, I believe from not carefully studying and comparing together the accounts of the different

Jesus not condemned for professing to be the Christ.

^k See John xx. 31.

evangelists, are apt to take for granted that the crime for which our Lord was condemned was that of falsely pretending to be the Messiah or Christ. But whatever the Jews may have thought of *that* crime, they certainly could not have found it mentioned, and death denounced against it, in the Law of Moses. It could at any rate, have been no crime, unless *proved* to be a *false* pretension ; which was not even attempted. Nor could they have brought that offence (even if proved) under the head of *blasphemy* ; unless they had been *accustomed to expect* the Messiah as a divine person. *Then*, indeed, the claim of being the Messiah, and the claim of divine honour, would have amounted to the same thing. But so far were

The Messiah not expected by the Jews to be a divine person.

they from having this expectation (not to multiply proofs) they were completely at a loss to answer our Lord's question, how David, if the Christ were to be David's son, could speak of Him as a divine Being under the title of LORD. "If David then call him LORD, how is he his son," is a question which they would have answered without a moment's hesitation, if they had expected that the Christ should be, though the Son of David after the flesh and as a human Being, yet, the Son of God in such a sense as to make him a Divine Being also.

Whatever good reasons then they might have

found in prophecy for such expectation, it seems plain that they had it not.

And the same I believe is the case, generally speaking, with the Jews of the present day.¹ A learned modern Jew, who has expressly written that Jesus “falsely demanded faith in Himself as the true God of Israel,” adds that “if a prophet, or *even the Messiah Himself*, had offered proof of his divine mission by miracles, but claimed divinity, he ought to be stoned to death ;” conformably *i. e.* to the command in Deut. xiii. And the only Jew with whom I ever conversed on the subject appeared to hold the same doctrine ; though he was at a loss when I asked him to reconcile it with the application of the title of Emmanuel.

The Jewish Council then could not, it appears, capitally convict our Lord, merely for professing to be the Christ, even though falsely : and accordingly we may observe that they did not even seek for any proof that his pretension *was* false. But as soon as he acknowledged Himself to be the “Son of the living God,” they immediately pronounced Him “guilty of death” for blasphemy ; *i. e.* as seeking to lead the People (Deut. xiii.) to pay divine honour to another besides the true God. They convict Him on

Pretensions
of Jesus to
be the
Christ not
attempted
to be dis-
proved.

¹ See Wilson on the New Testament, above referred to.

his own testimony (having “heard of his own mouth”) of the crime which they afterwards describe to Pilate. “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

Jesus was
rightly un-
derstood as
claiming to
be divine.

§ 7. No candid reader then can doubt, I think, that the Jews understood Him to claim by that title a divine character. And He Himself must have *known* that they so understood Him. As little can it be doubted therefore that they must have *rightly* understood Him. For if He—condemned as He was on the evidence of His own words—had known that those words were understood differently from his real meaning, and yet had not corrected the mistake, He would have been Himself bearing false witness against Himself, since no one can suppose it makes any difference in point of veracity, whether a man says that which is untrue in *every* sense, or that which, though in a certain sense true, yet is false in the sense in which he knows it to be understood. It is a mere waste of labour and learning and ingenuity to inquire what meaning such and such an expression is *capable* of bearing, in a case where we know, as we do here, what was the sense which was actually conveyed by it, to the hearers, and which the

speaker must have been aware it did convey to them.

Jesus did therefore acknowledge the fact alleged against Him; viz. that of claiming to be the Son of God in such a sense as to incur the penalty (supposing that claim unwarranted) of death for blaspheming, according to the law respecting those who should entice Israel to worship any other than the one true God. The whole question therefore of his being rightly or wrongfully condemned, turns on the justness of that claim:—on his actually having or not having that divine character which the Jews understood Him to assume. For if He were *not* such, and yet called Himself the Son of God, knowing in what sense they understood the title, I really am at a loss to see on what ground we can find fault with the sentence they pronounced.

Whether Jesus was unjustly or justly condemned depends on his being or not being a divine person.

It does appear to me therefore,—I say this without presuming to judge those who think differently; but—to me it appears that the whole question of Christ's divine mission, and consequently of the truth of Christianity, turns on the claim which he so plainly appears to have made to divine honour for Himself.

I am not one of those indeed who profess to understand and explain why it was necessary for man's salvation that God should have visited his People pre-

A heaven-sent teacher could not have put forth a false claim.

cisely in the way he did. On such points, as I dare not believe less, so I pretend not to understand more, than He has expressly revealed. If I had been taught in Scripture that God had thought fit to save the world through the agency of some Angel, or some great Prophet, not possessing in himself a divine character, I could not have presumed to maintain the impossibility of that. But *this* does strike me as utterly impossible, that a heaven-sent messenger—the Saviour of the world,—should be a person who claimed a divine character that did *not* belong to Him; and who thus gave rise to, and permitted, and encouraged, a system of idolatry. This is an idea so revolting to all my notions of divine purity, and indeed of common morality, that I could never bring myself to receive as a divine revelation any religious system that contained it.

All the difficulties on the opposite side—and I do not deny that *every* religious persuasion has its difficulties—are as nothing in comparison of the difficulty of believing that Jesus (supposing Him neither an impostor nor a madman) could have made the declaration He did make at his trial, if He were conscious of having no just claim to divine honour.

Declarations of Jesus at his trial, alone sufficient.

§ 8. And the conclusion to which we are thus led, arises (it should be observed) out of the mere consideration

of the title "Son of God," or "only-begotten Son of God," as applied to Jesus Christ; without taking into account any of the confirmations of the same conclusion (and there are very many) which may be drawn from other parts of the Sacred Writings, both of the Evangelists and Apostles—from many things that were said, and that were done, both by our Lord and by his Apostles.

There is indeed no one of these their recorded actions and expressions that may not be explained away by an ingenious critic, who should set himself to do so, and who should proceed like a legal advocate, examining every possible sense in which some law or precedent that makes against his client, may be interpreted. But again, there is hardly one of these passages which can be thus explained away without violating the maxim above laid down; viz. that we should consider, not *any* interpretation whatever that such and such words can bear, but—what notion they conveyed, and must have been known to convey, to the hearers, at the time.^m For if this were a mistaken notion,—an untrue sense,—it follows inevitably that Christ and his Apostles must have been *teachers* of falsehood, even though their words should be capable of a different and true signification.

Unfairness
of explain-
ing away
the declara-
tions of
Christ and
the Apostles.

^m See Sermon on the "Name Emmanuel."

Impossibility of the Evangelists and Apostles having encouraged idolatry.

Unless, therefore, we conceive them capable of knowingly promoting idolatry,—unless we can consider Jesus Himself as either an insane fanatic, or a deliberate impostor,—we must assign to Him, the “Author and Finisher of our Faith,” the “only-begotten Son of God,” who is “one with the Father,” that divine character which He and his Apostles so distinctly claimed for Him; and acknowledge that God truly “was in Christ, reconciling the World unto Himself.”

Declarations before Pilate to be interpreted on similar principles.

§ 9. Not less important, I conceive, are the lessons to be drawn from the second trial,—that before Pilate,—to which our Lord was subjected; provided this portion also of the sacred narrative be studied on the principle already laid down; that of interpreting his declarations with reference to the meaning they were meant to convey at the time, and to the very persons he was addressing.

The Jewish Council, having found Jesus guilty of a capital crime, and being not permitted,ⁿ under the Roman laws, to inflict capital punishment (for the stoning of Stephen appears to have been an irregular and tumultuous outbreak of popular fury), immediately bring Him before Pilate on a new and perfectly different charge. “The whole multitude of them

ⁿ οὐκ ἐξέστιν.

arose and led Him unto Pilate: and they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He himself is Christ, a King." For the crime of which He had been convicted before *them*, that of blasphemy, in seeking to draw aside the Jews to the worship of another besides the LORD Jehovah, though a capital crime under the Mosaic law, was none at all in the court of the Roman Governor; and again, the crime alleged in this latter court, treason against the Roman emperor, was no crime at all under the law of Moses.

Now, in studying the circumstances of this second trial, we ought, as has been above observed, to proceed by the same rule of interpretation as in respect of the former trial; viz. to understand our Lord's expressions, not in any sense whatever that they can be brought to bear, nor, necessarily, in the sense which to *us* may seem the most suitable, but in the sense, as far as we can ascertain it, in which he must have known that He was understood at the time.

When then He was charged before Pilate with "speaking against Cæsar" and "making Himself a King," how does He defend Himself? As on a former occasion, when his adversaries had tried to *make* Him commit the offence with which they now

Defence of
Jesus
against the
charge of
treason.

charged Him, of interfering with the secular government of Cæsar, He, so far from “forbidding to give tribute,” drew the line between secular and spiritual government, saying, “Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.” So now, before Pilate, He asserts his claim to be a King, but declares that “His kingdom is not of this world,” and that, accordingly, his servants were not allowed to fight for Him; and He further describes his kingly office to consist in “bearing witness of the truth.”

The result was that Pilate acquitted Him; declaring publicly that he “found no fault at all in Him.” It is plain, therefore, that he must have believed—or at least professed to believe—both that the declarations of Jesus were true, and that they amounted to a total disavowal of all interference with the secular government by Himself or his followers, as such.

Importance
of consider-
ing the oc-
casion on
which Jesus
was speak-
ing.

Much ingenuity has been expended,—I must needs say, has been *wasted*,—in drawing out from our Lord’s expressions before Pilate, every sense that his words can be found capable of bearing; while a man of little or no ingenuity, but of plain good sense and sincerity of purpose, seeking in simplicity to learn what Jesus really did mean, can hardly, I should think, fail of that meaning, if he does keep in mind the *occa-*

sion on which He was speaking, and the sense in which He must have known that his language would be understood. The occasion on which He spoke was when on his trial before a Roman governor, for *treason*,—for a design to subvert, or in some way interfere with, the established government. To this charge, it is plain Pilate understood Him to plead *not guilty*; and gave credit to his plea. Pilate, therefore, must have taken the declaration that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world," as amounting to a renunciation of all secular coercion,—all forcible measures in behalf of his religion. And we cannot, without imputing to our blessed Lord a fraudulent evasion, suppose Him to have really meant any thing different from the sense which He knew his words conveyed. Such is the conclusion which I cannot but think any man must come to who is not seeking, as in the interpretation of an Act of Parliament, for any sense most to his own purpose that the words can be made to bear, however remote that may be from the known design of the Legislator; but who, with reverential love, is seeking with simplicity and in earnest to *learn* what is the description that Christ gave of his kingdom.

But the ingenuity which has been (as I said before) wasted in trying to explain our Lord's words in some other way, has been called forth by a desire to escape some of the *consequences*

which follow from taking them in their simple and obvious sense. Those who are seeking not really to learn the true sense of our Lord's declarations, but to reconcile them with the conduct of some Christian States, and to justify the employment of secular force in behalf of Religion, are driven to some ingenious special-pleading on the words employed, in order to draw from them such a sense as may suit their own purpose.

But all this ingenuity is (as I said before) wasted; because even supposing it proved that the words which Jesus uttered are, in themselves, capable of bearing some other meaning, still, nothing is gained (supposing our object is, not to *evade*, but to *understand*, Scripture) if that meaning be one which could not have been so understood at the time, or which would have been one utterly foreign to the occasion, and irrelevant to the question that was to be tried.

Other interpretations put forward. § 10. *E. G.* I have heard it said that our Lord's description of his kingdom as "not of this world" meant *merely* that He claimed to possess a spiritual dominion (as undoubtedly He did) over the souls of men, and to be the distributor of the rewards and judgments of the other world. And such certainly is his claim: but the essential point, with a view to the trial then going on, was, that this was his

only claim. He did not merely claim spiritual dominion, but he also *renounced* temporal. He declared not merely that his kingdom is of the *next* world ; but that it is *not* of *this* world.

In fact the *mere* assertion of his spiritual dominion, and one extending beyond the grave, would have been, at that time, and in reference to the charge brought against Him, wholly irrelevant, and foreign to the question. He was charged with “speaking against Cæsar,”—with making Himself King in opposition to the Roman emperor.

Mere assertion of spiritual dominion would have been irrelevant.

The Jews expected (as Pilate could hardly have been ignorant) a Christ who should be a heaven-sent “King of the Jews,” possessing both temporal and spiritual authority ; a kingdom, both of this world and of the next : for the great mass of the nation believed in a future state. Any man claiming to be such a King of the Jews, would evidently be an opponent of the Roman government. His *spiritual* pretensions, the Romans did not concern themselves about. It was the assumption of *temporal* power that threatened danger to the Romans ; and it was of this assumption that Jesus was accused : *did He not distinctly deny it?* There was no question about the rewards and punishments of another world. The question was, whether He did or did not design to claim, for Himself, or his followers *as such*, any

kind of secular empire :^o could any words have disclaimed it more strongly than those He used ? And can any one in his senses seriously believe that when Jesus said, “ My kingdom is not of this world,” He meant to be understood as saying that his kingdom was not only of this world, but of the next world too ?

Mere disclaimer of present personal claims would have been frivolous.

No,—I have heard it said by some other expounders, He did mean to disclaim all temporal dominion for *Himself personally and at that time* ; but that hereafter when “ the kingdoms of this world shall become kingdoms of the Lord,” and when “ kings should become nursing-fathers” of his church, when “ the church should be in its complete development by being perfectly identified with the state,”—then, all those Christians who should have attained power, should exercise that power, in enforcing the profession of his gospel, and in putting down idolatry, infidelity, heresy, dissent, and all false religion. In short, at the time when Christ stood before Pilate, his kingdom was not of this world, “ because” (I am citing the words of one of the most celebrated ancient divines) “ that prophecy was not yet fulfilled, ‘ Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings, be learned, ye that are judges of the earth ; serve the Lord with

^o See Appendix, Note (A.)

fear;” the rulers of the earth, he adds, were at that time opposed to the Gospel; the Apostles and other early disciples were *unable* to compel men to conform to the true faith; and *therefore* it was that the secular arm was not yet called to aid against the Church’s enemies.

Now, without entering into the question whether our Lord’s words could, in themselves, bear such a meaning; let us confine ourselves to the principle we set out with, and merely consider whether He could possibly have meant to be *so understood*. For this, we should observe, would clearly have been to *plead guilty to the charge*. It mattered nothing to the Roman Government whether it were Jesus *Himself*, or his *followers*, that should revolt against Cæsar’s power, and set up a rival kingdom. And, therefore, when our Lord Himself, and afterwards Paul and the other Apostles, *defended* themselves against the imputation of seditious designs, it is impossible they could have meant to be understood as merely disclaiming such designs *for the present*, and renouncing temporal dominion only for *themselves, personally*, but reserving for their followers, when these should have become strong enough, the right to establish by force a Christian political ascendancy, and to put down all other religions. To have defended themselves against their accusers by

To claim temporal power for his followers would have been to plead guilty.

acknowledging the very designs which those accusers imputed to them, would have been downright insanity.

Parallel
case of
political re-
volution-
ists.

But such absurdities as would, in *any other subject*, revolt every man of common sense, are sometimes tolerated in the interpretations of Scripture, that are framed in order to serve a purpose. For instance, suppose some emissaries of the Pretender in the last century, or, in later times, of the French revolutionists, or of the Chartists, or any set of revolutionists of the present day, to go about the country proclaiming and disseminating their principles, and then to be arrested and brought to trial for sedition : can any one conceive them defending themselves against the charge, by pleading that they did not intend that *they themselves*, but that their *disciples*, should obtain the government of the country, and enforce their principles ; that they aimed at the possession and the monopoly of civil rights^p and privileges, not for themselves, but for their *successors* ; that they did not mean to take up arms till they should have collected a sufficient number of followers ; and that they taught all men to yield obedience to the existing government *till* they should be strong enough to overthrow it ? Who does not see at once

^p See Appendix, Note (A.)

that to urge such a plea would convince every one of their being madmen? And yet this is what must be imputed to Jesus and his disciples, by any one who can suppose that they *meant to be understood* by the Roman magistrates as merely disclaiming all interference with civil government, till they should become numerous enough to enforce the claim;—all resort to secular coercion in religious matters, till they should have strength to employ it effectually;—all political monopoly, till they should be in a condition to maintain it by a strong hand.

Jesus, then, it is plain, when He said “My kingdom *is* not of this world,” could not have meant to be *understood* as implying that it *should* be so hereafter.

§ 11. But had He then some *hidden* meaning, which He did *not* intend to be understood at the time? Did He design to convey one sense to the Roman governor, and another to his own disciples?—to reserve for his followers in future times, that power to enforce the acknowledgment of his gospel, which He *pretended* to disclaim?

Supposed
hidden
meaning of
our Lord's
declaration.

It seems almost too shocking even to ask such a question: and yet it is but too true, that such, in substance, (however glossed over in words,) must be the meaning attributed to our blessed Lord by those who would reconcile his declara-

tions before Pilate with that which they represent as the right and the duty of every Christian Governor. “The magistrate,” they say, (I am giving the very words that have been employed,) “who restrains, coerces, and punishes any one who opposes the true faith, obeys the command of God:” and they contend that a Christian Governor is not only authorized, but bound, to secure to the professors of the true faith a monopoly of political power and civil rights. Now, to reconcile such doctrines with the declarations of Christ and his Apostles, a meaning must be attributed to those declarations which it would have been madness for them to have *avowed* at the time;—in short, a *hidden* meaning.

It is recorded of an ancient king of Egypt,—one of the Ptolemies—that he employed a celebrated architect to build a magnificent Light-House, for the benefit of shipping, and ordered an inscription in honour of himself to be engraved on it: the architect, it is said, though inwardly coveting the honour of such a record for *himself*, was obliged to comply; but made the inscription on a plaster resembling stone, but of perishable substance: in the course of years this crumbled away; and the next generation saw *another* inscription, recording the name, not of the King, but of the architect, which had been secretly engraved on the durable stone below.

Now, just such a device as this is attributed to our Lord and his Apostles by those who believe them to have designed that secular power should hereafter be called in to enforce the Christian Faith, though all such designs were *apparently* disavowed, in order to serve a present purpose. According to such interpreters, "My kingdom is not of this world," was only an inscription on the perishable plaster: the design of "coercing and punishing" by secular power all opponents of the true faith, was, it seems, the engraving on the stone beneath. "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's," was but the outward part of the inscription; the addition was an inner hidden engraving, directing that Christians, when become strong enough, should compel both Cæsar and his subjects,—all Rulers and all citizens—either to acknowledge the true faith, or to forfeit their civil rights. It was the *outside* inscription only that ran thus, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man; * * * the powers that be, are ordained of God:" the secret characters on the *stone* said, "Take care as soon as possible to make every ordinance of man submit to *you*," and to provide that none but those of your own Body shall *be* in authority; and that they shall use that authority in enforcing the profession of your religion.

It might seem incredible, did we not know it

Dishonesty
of a double
meaning.

to be the fact, that persons professing a deep reverence for Christ and his Apostles as heaven-sent messengers, should attribute to them this double-dealing;—should believe them to have secretly entertained and taught the very views of which their adversaries accused them, and which they uniformly disclaimed: that the blessed Jesus* Himself, who rebukes *hypocrisy* more strongly than perhaps any other sin, should be regarded by his professed followers as having pretended to disavow that which was his real design, and which He imparted to his Apostles; teaching *them* in like manner to keep the secret till they should be strong enough to assert the political supremacy of the Gospel, and to extirpate, or hold in subjection as vassals, all professors of false religion.

Impiety of attributing double-dealing to our Lord. All this, I say, might seem hardly credible, did not daily experience show us how easily (not only in this but in other cases also) even intelligent men are satisfied with the slightest pretences of argument—with the most extravagant conclusions—when they are seeking not really for *instruction* as to what they *ought* to do, but for a *justification* of what they are *inclined* to do. Such a bias of inclination, is like the magnet which is said to have been once secretly placed near a ship's compass, by a traitor who purposed to deliver the crew into the enemy's hands. All their

diligence and skill in working the ship and steering by this perverted compass, served only to further them on the wrong course.

Without presuming to pronounce judgment on the general moral character of others, I cannot forbear saying, for myself, that if I could believe Jesus to have been guilty of such subterfuges as I have been speaking of, I not only could not acknowledge Him as sent from God, but should reject Him with *the deepest moral indignation*.

How far this indignant disgust may have been excited in the breasts of some who have taken for granted, on the authority of learned and zealous divines, that the interpretation I have been reprobating is to be received, and who may, in consequence, have *rejected Christianity* with abhorrence, it is for those who maintain such an interpretation carefully to consider.

§ 12. It is in many respects important to observe and to keep in mind, to how great an extent both our obliquity of moral judgment, and a deficiency in the reasoning-powers, will often affect, on some *one or two particular points*, a man who may be, on the whole, and in other points, where his particular prejudices have not gained dominion, a person both morally and intellectually above the average. In the present case, for instance, one

Fallacious
arguments
adduced by
generally
intelligent
men.

may find men of much intelligence misled by a fallacy which in the ordinary concerns of life every person of common sense would see through at once.

Objections
brought
against the
obvious in-
terpreta-
tion.

Was it designed, they say, that Christians should never take any part in civil affairs;—should never be magistrates or legislators, and thus partake of political power? And if this *is* permitted, must they not, as civil magistrates, act on Christian principles? No doubt; but they would *cease* to act on Christian principles if they should employ the *coercive power* of civil magistrates *in the cause of Christianity*;—if they should not only take a part in civil affairs, but claim *as* Christians, or as members of a particular Church, a *monopoly* of civil rights. It is this, and this only, that tends to make Christ's kingdom “a kingdom of this world.”

The same
persons
may be
members of
distinct So-
cieties.

Now this is a distinction which in all other cases is readily perceived by every man of common sense. For instance, there are many well-known Societies in this and most other countries, which no one would call in any degree political Societies; such as Academies for the cultivation of mathematical and other sciences,—Agricultural Societies,—Antiquarian Societies, and the like; now it would be reckoned silly even to ask respecting any one of these Societies, whether the

members of it were excluded from taking any part in civil affairs, and whether a magistrate or a legislator could be admitted as a member of it. Every one would see the absurdity of even entertaining any doubt on this point: and it would be reckoned no less silly to inquire whether the admission of such persons as members, constituted that Academy a political Society. It would at once be answered that the Society itself, and the members of it *as such*, had nothing to do with political, but only with scientific matters; and that though individual members of it might be also members of the legislature, the provinces of the two Societies, *as Societies*,—of a scientific association, and a political community,—are altogether distinct.

Now this is just the non-interference in political affairs which Christ and his Apostles professed, and taught, and carried into practice, in respect of the religion of the Gospel. As the Apostle Peter converted to the Faith Cornelius the *Centurion*, so likewise Paul, who avowed his practice of “witnessing both to small and *great*,”—converted Sergius Paulus the Roman Governor at Paphos, and Dionysius the Areopagite, a judge of the highest court at Athens; and expressed his ardent wish to convert King Agrippa, and also all “who heard him that day.” Yet neither Peter nor Paul ever thought of desiring the Centurion—

What was taught by the Apostles to their converts.

the Governor—the Judge and the King, to lay down their offices, and renounce all concern with secular business; nor did they ever dream that their holding such offices when Christians, would make Christ's a “kingdom of this world.” They wished, and they openly endeavoured, to make “the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of the Lord,” and “kings the nursing-fathers of the Church,” in the sense of making the *individuals* of every nation members of Christ;—of inducing kings and magistrates, and subjects too, to abstain from persecuting Christians, and to *become* Christians, and to act so as to induce others to follow their example.

All Christians required to act on Christian principles, in all the relations of life.

It has been said that this passage respecting the “kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdom of the Lord,” describes the Christian Church in its perfection, and “My kingdom is not of this world,” describes it in its infancy. But what Jesus and his Apostles taught on this point, belongs, and ever did, and ever will belong, to the Christian Church in *every* stage alike; namely, that the Christian is to act, in *all* the relations of life, in whatever circumstances he is placed, on Christian principles. And what were the principles they inculcated? “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's:” “Render unto *all* their due; tribute to whom tribute is due;

custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour:" "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake:" "Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake," &c. Never was the Christian required to do less than conform to such principles; never will he be called on to do more.

If Sergius Paulus and other converted Roman governors had consulted Paul, whether they should use their power as *Roman Governors* to put down Paganism by force, or if Dionysius, after having induced (suppose) the other judges of the Areopagus to embrace the Gospel, had proposed to the Apostle that that Court should sit in judgment on religious offences, and inflict penalties on all persons opposing or rejecting the true Faith, or deprive them of civil rights,—if the Apostle Paul, I say, had been *thus* consulted, what answer think you he would have given? What answer *must* he have given, if we believe him sincere in his professions, and if we believe his great Master to have really meant exactly what He declared? The Apostle would surely have explained to such inquirers that Christ meant the reception of his Gospel to rest on sincere inward conviction, not on constrained outward profession, which is all that legal penalties *can* produce:—that their office

Different kinds of societies to be kept distinct as to their end and means.

as governors and judges, was to take cognizance of men's *overt acts*, and to punish and restrain crimes against the civil community ; but that their duty as Christians was to regulate, and try to persuade others to regulate, the inward motives and dispositions of the heart, according to Gospel principles ; and to keep themselves not from *crimes* merely, but from *sins* against God ; and to " exercise themselves in having themselves a conscience void of offence, before God and man," (Acts xxiv. 16,) not in seeking to force another to speak or act against his conscience. He would not have forbidden • them to take a part (as it is most fit that the laity should) in the government of the Church, or to hold any ecclesiastical or spiritual office in it ; or again, to retain their civil offices : but he would have deprecated with abhorrence their blending the two classes of offices together, and attempting to employ the power of *coercion* which essentially belongs to the civil magistrate, in the cause of Christ's religion. He would have told them to strive to convert and reclaim their neighbours from superstitious error, (even as *he* had converted *them*) by instruction and *persuasion* ; never losing sight of their great Master's rule, of doing as they would be done by ; not inflicting therefore on the unbeliever the persecution which they had disapproved when directed against Christians ; but

leaving to every man that liberty of conscience which they desire to enjoy themselves.

Such would have been the answer, I think we cannot doubt, which the Apostles would have given to such inquirers; and which, if Peter and Paul were now on earth, they *would* give to any like questions at this day. For such surely must be the decision of any who is convinced that Jesus Himself was perfectly sincere in the declaration He made at his trial, and that He “left us an example, that we should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was *guile* found in his mouth.”

§ 13. Yet if the Apostle Paul, with these sentiments, were now on earth, would there not be some danger of his being accounted a *latitudinarian*—a person nearly indifferent about religious distinctions,—regarding one Religion nearly as good as another;—ready to profess any,—and believing little or nothing of any? For such is the character often attributed to any one who disapproves of the employment of secular force in behalf of the true Faith, or the monopoly by its professors, of civil rights.

Alleged
latitudina-
rian ten-
dency of
the above
principles.

That there are persons indifferent about all religions, is true; and it is true that *some* of them are, from humanity of disposition, averse to persecution and coercion.

Latitudina-
rian princi-
ples, intole-
rant.

For many persons,—perhaps most,—are tolerant or intolerant according to their respective *tempers*, and not according to their *principles*. But as far as principles are concerned, certainly the latitudinarian is the more likely to be intolerant, and the sincerely conscientious, tolerant. A man who is careless about religious *sincerity*, may clearly see and appreciate the political convenience of religious *uniformity*; and if he has no religious scruples of his own, he will not be the more likely to be tender of the religious scruples of others; if he is ready himself to profess what he does not believe, he will see no reason why others should not do the same.

That man on the contrary whose own conscience is tender, and his sense of religion deep-felt and sincere, will be (so far) the more disposed to respect the conscience of another, and to avoid giving occasion to hypocritical professions. His own faith being founded on genuine conviction, he will seek for the genuine conviction of others, and not their forced conformity. He will remember that “the highest truth, if professed by one who believes it not in his heart, is, to him, a lie, and that he sins greatly by professing it. Let us try as much as we will, to convince our neighbours; but let us beware of influencing their conduct, when we fail in influencing their convictions. He who bribes or frightens his

neighbour into doing an act which no good man would do for reward, or from fear, is tempting his neighbour to sin ; he is assisting to lower and to harden his conscience ;—to make him act for the favour or from the fear of man, instead of for the favour and from the fear of God : and if this be a sin in him, it is a double sin in us to tempt him to it.”^q

And above all, in proportion as any man has a right understanding of the Gospel, and a deep veneration for his great Master, and an earnest desire to tread in his steps, and a full confidence in his promises, in the same degree will he perceive that the employment of secular coercion in the cause of the Gospel is at variance with the true spirit of the Gospel ; and that Christ’s declarations are to be interpreted as He Himself knew them to be understood, then, and are to be the guide of his followers, now.

And finally, such a man will be convinced that it implies a sinful distrust,—
a want of faith in Christ’s wisdom, and goodness, and power,—to call in the aid of the arm of flesh,—of military or civil force,—in the cause of Him who declared that He *could* have called in the aid of “more than twelve legions of angels ;” and who, when “all power was given unto Him in Heaven and in Earth,” sent

Real knowledge of the Gospel conducive to toleration.

Tolerance one fruit of faith.

^q Arnold’s *Christian Life*, p. 435.

forth his disciples—not to *subjugate*, or to rule, but to “*teach* all nations ;” and “sent them forth as sheep among wolves,” forewarned of persecutions, and instructed to “bless them that cursed them,” to return “good for evil ;” and to “endure all things,—hope all things,—believe all things,” for which He, their Master, had prepared them :—to believe *all* that He had taught,—to hope *all* that He had promised,—and to endure and do *all* that He had commanded.

ESSAY II.

ON THE
CONSTITUTION OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
ITS POWERS, AND MINISTRY.

ESSAY II.

§ 1. OF all who acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as their Master, “the Author and Finisher of their faith,” Christianity designed to be a social Religion. there are scarcely any who do not agree in regarding Him as the Founder and perpetual Head of a religious *Society* also ;—as having instituted and designed for permanent continuance, a Community or system of Communities, to which his Disciples here on earth were to belong. The religion He introduced was manifestly designed by Him,—and so understood by his immediate followers,—to be a *social* Religion. It was not merely a revelation of certain truths to be received, and of practical rules to be observed,—it was not a mere system of doctrines and precepts to be embraced by each

individual independently of others ; and in which his agreement or co-operation with any others, would be accidental ; as when several men have come to the same conclusions in some Science, or have adopted the same system of Agriculture or of Medicine ; but it was to be a *combination* of men who should be “members of the Body of Christ,”—living stones of one Spiritual Temple ;^a “edifying” (*i. e.* building up) “one another in their Faith ;”—and brethren of one holy Family.

This “Kingdom of Heaven,” as it is called, which the Lord Jesus established, was proclaimed (*i. e.* preached)^b by his forerunner John the Baptist as “*at hand.*” And the same, in this respect, was the preaching of our Lord Himself, and of His Disciples,—first the Twelve, and afterwards the Seventy,—whom He sent out during His ministry on earth. The good tidings they were to proclaim, were only of the *approaching* Kingdom of Heaven ; it was a joyful *expectation* only that they were commissioned to spread : it was a preparation of men’s

^a See Sermon IV., “On a Christian Place of Worship,” and also Dr. Hinds’s “Three Temples.”

^b This word has come to be ordinarily applied to religious *instruction* ; from which, however, it is always clearly distinguished in Scripture. It signifies, properly, to *announce* as a *herald*. Our Lord’s “*preaching* that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand,” and his *teaching* the People, are always expressed by different words.

hearts for the coming of that Kingdom, that they were to teach.

But when the personal ministry of Christ came to a close, the Gospel they were thenceforward to preach was the good tidings of that Kingdom not *approaching* merely, but actually *begun*,—of the first Christian Community set on foot,—of a kingdom which their Master had “*appointed* unto them:” thenceforward, they were not merely to *announce* that kingdom, but to *establish* it, and invite all men to enrol themselves in it: they were not merely to make known, but to execute, their Master’s design, of commencing that Society of which He is the Head, and which he has promised to be with “always, even unto the end of the world.”^c

We find Him, accordingly, directing them not only to “go into all the world, and preach to every creature,”^d but further, to

^c It is likely that the Doxology at the end of the Lord’s Prayer, “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,” (which all the soundest critics, I believe, are now agreed, does not exist in the best MSS. of the Gospels,) was adopted by the Disciples very soon after our Lord’s departure from earth. At the time when He first taught the prayer to his Disciples, it would have been premature to speak of the heavenly kingdom in the present tense, as actually established. They were taught to pray for its coming as a thing future. At a later period, it was no less proper to allude to it as already existing; and the prayer for its “coming,” would be, from the circumstances of the case, a prayer for its continued extension and firmer hold on men’s hearts.

^d See a Sermon by Dr. Dickinson (now Bishop of Meath), on our Lord’s two charges to his disciples.

“teach” (“make disciples of,” as in the margin of the Bible) “all nations;” admitting them as members of the Body of Disciples, by “baptizing them into^c the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

Of his design to establish what should be emphatically a Social Religion,—a “Fellowship” or “Communion of Saints,” there can be, I think, no doubt in the mind of any reflecting reader of our sacred books. Besides our Lord’s general promise of “coming unto, and dwelling in, *any man* who should love Him and keep His saying,” there is a distinct promise also of an especial presence in any *Assembly*—even of “two or three—gathered together in his name.” Besides the general promises made to prayer,—to the prayer of an individual “in the closet,”—there is a distinct promise also to those who shall “agree together touching something they shall ask.” And it is in conformity with his own institution that Christians have, ever since, celebrated what they designate as, emphatically, *the Communion*, by “meeting together to break bread,” in commemoration of His redemption of His People.

His design, in short, manifestly was, to adapt

^c “In the name,” is a manifest mis-translation, originating, apparently, with the Vulgate Latin, which has “in nomine.” The preposition, in the original, is not *in* but *eis*, “into” or “to.”

His Religion to the *social* principles of man's nature ;^f and to bind His Disciples, throughout all ages, to each other, by those ties of mutual attachment, sympathy, and co-operation, which in every human Community and Association, of whatever kind, are found so powerful.

§ 2. Obvious, and indeed trite, as the remark may appear, most persons are apt, I think, not sufficiently to consider what important conclusions result from it ;—how much is implied in the constituting of a *Community*. It is worth while, therefore, to pause at this point, and inquire what are the inherent properties and universal character naturally and necessarily belonging to any regularly-constituted Society, as such, for whatever purpose formed. For I think it will appear, on a very simple examination, that several points which have been denied or disregarded by some, and elaborately, but not always satisfactorily, maintained by others, arise, as obvious consequences, out of the very intrinsic character,—the universal and necessary description of a regular *community*.

It seems to belong to the very essence of a Community, that it should have—
1st, *Officers* of some kind ; 2dly, *Rules* enforced by some kind of penalties ;

A Community requires OFFICERS, RULES, and power to admit MEMBERS.

^f See Bampton Lectures for the year 1822, Lect. I.

and, 3dly, Some power of admitting and excluding persons as *Members*.

For, 1st, whatever may be the character, and whatever the proposed objects, of a regularly-constituted Community, Officers of some kind are essential to it. In whatever manner they may be appointed,—whether by hereditary succession, or by rotation,—or by election of any kind,—whatever be the number or titles of them, and whatever the distribution of their functions,—(all which are matters of detail,) Officers of some kind every Community *must* have. And these, or some of these, while acting in their proper capacity, *represent* the Community; and are, so far, invested with whatever powers and rights belong to *it*; so that their acts, their rights, their claims, are considered as those of the whole Body. We speak, *e. g.* indifferently of this or that having been done by the Athenians, the Romans, the Carthaginians; or, by the Athenian, the Roman, or Carthaginian *Government or Rulers*.[§] And so also when we speak of the acts of some University, or of the *Governors* of that University, we are using two equivalent expressions.

§ And it is to be observed that it makes no difference, as to this point, whether the Governors are *elected by* the governed, and in any degree restrained by them, or are hereditary and unlimited. In all cases, the *established and recognized* Rulers of any Community are considered as *representing* it.

2dly. It seems equally essential to every Community that it should have certain Regulations or Bye-laws, binding on its own members. And if it be not wholly subjected to the control, and regulated by the directions of some extraneous power, but is in any degree an *independent* Community, it must so far, have power to enact, and abrogate,—to suspend, alter, and restore, bye-laws, for itself; namely, such regulations, extending to matters intrinsically indifferent, as are not at variance with the enactments of any superior authority. The enforcement also of the regulations of a Community by some kind of Penalties, is evidently implied by the very existence of Regulations. To say of any Community that its Laws are valid, and binding on its members, is to say that the violators of them may justly be visited with Penalties: and to recognise Officers in any Community is to recognise as among its Laws, submission to those Officers while in the exercise of their legitimate functions.

In the case of *Political* Communities, which is a peculiar one, inasmuch as they necessarily exercise an *absolutely-coercive* power,—the Penalties must be determined according to the wisdom and justice of each Government, and can have no other limit. But in a *voluntary* Community, the *ultimate*

Bye-laws
of a Com-
munity
binding on
its mem^r
bers.

Coercive
power be-
longs to Po-
litical Com-
munities.

Penalty must be expulsion ; all others, short of this, being submitted to as the *alternative*.^b But in every Community, of whatever description (or in those under whose control it is placed) there must reside a power of enacting, enforcing, and remitting, the Penalties by which due submission to its laws and to its officers is to be secured.

Admission
to member-
ship of a
Commu-
nity.

3dly. Lastly, no less essential to a Community seems to be a power, lodged somewhere, of determining questions of Membership. Whatever may be the claims or qualifications on which that may depend,—nay, even whether the community be a voluntary Association, or (as is the case with political Communities) one claiming compulsory power,—and whatever may be its purpose—in all cases, the admission to it, or exclusion from it, of each individual, must be determined by some recognised authority.

Since therefore this point, and also those others above-mentioned, seem, naturally and necessarily, to belong to every regular Community,—since it must, in short, consist of regularly-constituted *Members*, subject to certain *Rules*, and having certain *Officers*, it follows, that whoever directs or sanctions the establishment of a Community (as our Lord certainly

^b See Appendix, Note (B.)

did in respect of Christian Churches,) must be understood as thereby sanctioning those institutions which belong to the essence of a Community. To recognise a Community as actually having a legitimate existence, or as allowably to be formed, is to recognise it as having *Officers*,—as having *Regulations* enforced by certain Penalties, and as admitting or refusing to admit *Members*.

§ 3. All this, I say, seems to be im-
plied by the very nature of the case. But, on purpose, as it should seem, to
provide against any misapprehension or uncertainty, our Lord did not stop at the mere general sanction given by Him to the formation of a Christian Community, but He also particularized all the points I have been speaking of. He appointed or ordained the first *Officers*; He recognised the power of enacting and abrogating *Rules*; and He gave authority for the admitting of *Members*.

Rights di-
vinely con-
ferred on a
Christian
Community

Such is the obvious sense of his directions to his Apostles: obvious, I mean, *to them*,—with such habits of thought and of expression as they had, and as He must have known them to have. He must have known well what meaning his words would convey to his own countrymen, at that time. But some things which would appear plain and obvious to a Jew,—even an un-

learned Jew,—in those days, may be such as to require some examination and careful reflection to enable *us*, of a distinct Age and Country, to apprehend them in the same sense. When however we do examine and reflect, we can hardly doubt, I think—considering to whom, and at what time, He was speaking—that our Lord did sanction and enjoin the formation of a permanent religious Community or Communities, possessing all those powers which have been above alluded to. The power of “binding and loosing;”—*i. e.* enacting and enforcing, and of abrogating or suspending regulations, for a Christian Society, was recognised by his promise¹ of the *divine ratification* of those acts,—the “binding and loosing in heaven.” The “Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven,” denote the power of admitting persons Members of the Church, and excluding them from it. And the expression respecting the “remitting and retaining of sins,” if it is to be understood (as I think it is) as extending to any thing beyond the power of admitting members into Christ’s Church by “Baptism for the remission of sins,” must relate to the enforcement or remission of *ecclesiastical* censures for offences against a Christian Community.

By attentive reflection on the two topics I

¹ See Appendix, Note (C.)

have here suggested—namely, on the rights and powers essentially inherent in a Community, and consequently implied in the very institution of a Community, so far as they are not expressly excluded; and again, on the declarations of our Lord, as they must have been understood by his Disciples,—by reflection, I say, on these two topics, we shall be enabled, I think, to simplify and clear up several questions which have been sometimes involved in much artificial obscurity and difficulty.

§ 4. And our view of the sense in ^{Constitution of the Jewish Church.} which our Lord's directions are to be understood will be the more cleared and decided, if we reflect that all the circumstances which have been noticed as naturally pertaining to every Community, are to be found *in that religious Community in which the Disciples had been brought up*;—the Jewish Church, or (as it is called in the Old Testament) the Congregation, or Ecclesia,^k of which each Synagogue was a branch.¹ It had regular *Officers*;—the Elders or Presbyters, the Rulers of Synagogues, Ministers or Deacons, &c.—it had Bye-laws; being not only under the Levitical Law, but also having authority, within certain limits, of *making* regulations, and enforcing them by penalties (among others, that which we find alluded to in

^k Septuagint.

¹ See Vitringa on the Synagogue.

the New Testament, of excommunicating or “casting out of the Synagogue”): and it had power to admit Proselytes.

Rights exercised by the Jewish Church, familiar to the Disciples.

With all these points then, the Disciples of Jesus had long been familiar. And He spoke of them in terms with which they must have been well acquainted. For instance, the expression “binding and loosing”^m was, and still is, perfectly familiar to the Jews, in the sense of enforcing and abrogating rules; or,—which amounts precisely to the same thing.—deciding as to the manner, and the extent, in which a previously existing law is to be considered as binding: as is done by our Judges in their recorded Decisions.

The Jewish Church was indeed subject, by divine authority, to the Levitical Law. But minute as were the directions of that Law, there were still many points of detail, connected with the observance of it, which required to be settled by some competent authority: such as, for instance, what was, or was not, to be regarded as “work,” forbidden on the Sabbath:—what was to be considered as “servile work,” forbidden on certain other days:—and in what way the injunctions respecting their food, their garments,

^m See Lightfoot on this subject, and also Dr. Wotton’s valuable work on the Mishna.

the sowing of their fields, and several other matters, were to be observed.ⁿ

In regard to regulations of this kind, our Lord recognises the authority of the Jewish Rulers, as being so far successors of Moses; for He tells His hearers, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses’s seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe, and do.” And though He adds a caution not to “do after their works, for they say, and do not,” He does not teach that their personal demerits, or even that gross abuse of their power which He so strongly reprobates, could invalidate the legitimate exercise of that power. Indeed, since there is hardly any human Government that has not, at some time or other, abused, more or less, the power entrusted to it, to deny on that ground all claims whatever to submission, would be the very principle of anarchy.

The Jewish Rulers went beyond their proper province, when, instead of merely making such regulations as were necessary with a view to the due observance of the Mosaic Law, they superadded, on the authority of their supposed Tradition, commandments

Authority
of Jewish
Rulers re-
cognised by
Christ.

Abuse of
power by
Jewish Ru-
lers.

ⁿ Those who can procure, or gain access to Dr. W. Wotton’s *Selections from the Mishna*, will find in it much curious and interesting information relative to these and several other particulars, which throws great light on many passages of the New Testament.

foreign to that Law ; and, still more, evasions of the spirit of it.^o

Jesus accordingly censures them severely, as “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men ;” and again, as “making the Word of God of none effect, by their Tradition.” But still He distinctly recognises their legitimate authority in making such regulations as were necessarily left to their determination.

How the disciples would understand the Commission given them. § 5. And His disciples, therefore, who heard *both* of these His declarations, could not have been at any loss to understand what He meant by giving to themselves and the succeeding Officers of a Christian Church, the power to “bind and loose.” He charged them to “teach every one to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them ;” promising to be “with them always, even to the end of the world ;” and He also gave them the power of “binding and loosing ;” saying, “whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ;” (*i. e.* ratified by the divine sanction) “and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”

Power to make regulations. They would of course understand by this, not that they, or any of their successors, could have authority to dispense with their Master’s commandments,—to add to

^o See Wotton on the Mishna.

or alter the terms of Gospel-salvation,—to teach them, in short, *not* to “observe what He had commanded them,”—but, to enact, from time to time, to alter, to abrogate, or to restore, regulations respecting matters of detail, not expressly determined in Scripture, but which yet *must* be determined in some way or other, with a view to the good order of the Community, and the furtherance of its great objects.

So, also, we cannot suppose they would even suspect that they, or any mortal *man*, can have “power to forgive sins,” *as against God*;—that a *man* could be authorized either to absolve the *impenitent*, or to shut out from Divine mercy the penitent; or again, to read the heart, so as to distinguish between the two, without an express inspiration in each particular case.

And this express inspiration in particular cases, whatever may have been their original expectations, they must soon have learnt they were *not* to look for. They were to use their best discretion, to exercise due caution, in guarding against the admission of “false brethren”—“deceitful workers,”—hypocritical pretenders to Christian faith and purity;—but they had not, universally at least, any supernatural safeguard against such hypocrisy.

A Commu-
nity may
pardon
offences
against
itself.

The example of Simon Magus would alone show this, even if there were no others to be found. He was, we find, baptized along with the other Samaritans (Acts viii. 13), professing, as of course he must have done, sincere repentance and devotion to Christ: and yet the Apostles find him, after this, to be still “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” Acts viii. 21.

But still, the Gospel or good-tidings which they were authorized and enjoined to proclaim, being most especially tidings of “remission of sins” to all who should accept the invitation made to them by the preachers of that Gospel, they might properly be said to remit or retain according as they admitted to Baptism the attentive and professedly-penitent and believing hearers, and left out of the number of the subjects of Christ’s kingdom those who neglected or opposed Him.^P “Repent and be baptized every one of you *for the remission of sins*” is accordingly the kind of language in which they

^P Of course, if there had been a distinct divine appointment of such a sacrament as that of Penance, as it is called (including private Confession and priestly Absolution) we should have been bound to regard that in the same light as we do the sacraments of Baptism and of the Eucharist. Without presuming to set limits to the Divine favour, we feel bound to resort to, and to administer, these, as appointed means of grace. But if there had *not* been that Divine appointment of those sacraments, a Church would have no more authority to confer on *them* a sacramental character, than on the pretended sacrament of Penance.

invite their hearers every where to join the Body of their Master's People ; and yet it is certain the remission of sins was *conditional* only, and dependent on a condition of which they—the Apostles themselves—had no infallible knowledge ; the condition being, the real sincerity of that penitence and faith which the converts *appeared* and *professed* to have.^a

§ 6. But although this is the only sense in which the Apostles, or of course, Penalties for Ecclesiastical offences. any of their successors in the Christian ministry, can be empowered to “forgive sins” *as against God* ; *i. e.* though they can only pronounce and proclaim *his* forgiveness of all those who come to Him through Christ, and assure each individual of his acceptance with God, *supposing* him to be one of “those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe,” yet offences *as against a Community*, may, it is plain, be pardoned, or pardon for them withheld, *by* that Community, or by those its officers who duly represent it.

Whether our Lord intended, in what He said of “remitting and retaining sins,” to include (as seems to me the probable supposition) this power of inflicting or removing *ecclesiastical censures* for transgressions of the regulations of a

^a See Speech of Bishop Stanley in the House of Lords, May 26, 1840.

Society, we may be perhaps not authorized positively to conclude ; but at any rate, such a power is *inherent* necessarily in every Community, so far as not expressly reserved for some superior jurisdiction : *regulations* of some sort or other, and consequently *enforcement* of those regulations by some kind of penalties, being essential to a Community, and implied in the very nature of it.

But what leads to confusion of thought in some minds, is, that the same action may often have two distinct characters, according to the light in which it is viewed ; whether as a *sin*^r against God, or as a *crime* in reference to the Community ; and hence they are sometimes led to confound together the pardoning of the *crime*—the *offence* against the Community—with the pardoning of the *sin*. Now the regularly-appointed Ministers—the Officers of a Community may be authorized to enforce or remit penalties against the ecclesiastical offence,—the crime, in reference to the Community ; and may pronounce an *absolute* and complete pardon of a particular offender, for a particular act, on his making the requisite submission and reparation, and appearing outwardly, as far as man can judge, a proper subject for such pardon ; while the pardon of sin as against God, must *be conditional* on that

Different
views of
the same
act, as a
SIN and as
a CRIME.

^r See Warburton's Div. Leg.

heartly inward repentance, of which, in each case, God only, or those to whom He may impart the knowledge, can adequately judge.

When Paul says to the Corinthians in reference^s to that member of their Church who had caused a scandal by his offence, “to whomsoever ye forgive any thing, I forgive it also,” though I am far from saying that the offender’s sin against God was *not* pardoned, it is quite plain *this* is not what the Apostle is here speaking of. He is speaking of a case in which they and he were not merely to *announce*, but to *bestow* forgiveness. They were to receive back the offender, who had scandalized the Society into the bosom of that Society, on his professing with sincerity, or rather *apparent* sincerity (for of that alone they could be judges) his contrition. They would, of course—as believing those his professions—cherish a confident hope that his sin against God was pardoned. But doubtless they did not pretend either to an omniscient discernment of his Sincerity, or to the power either of granting divine pardon to the impenitent, or of excluding from God’s mercy the repentant sinner.

§ 7. Then again, with respect to the ^{Power of} the Keys.
“Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven” which our

^s 2 Cor. ii. 10.

Lord promised (Matt. xvi. 19) to give to Peter,^t the Apostles could not, I conceive, doubt that He was fulfilling that promise, to Peter and to the rest of them conjointly, when He “appointed unto them a Kingdom,” and when, on the day of Pentecost, He began the building of his Church, and enabled them, with Peter as their leader and chief spokesman, to open a door for the entrance of about three thousand converts at once; who received daily accessions to their number. The Apostles, and those commissioned by them, had the office of granting

^t There seems good reason to believe,—though it would be most unwarrantable to make it an article of faith,—that Peter really was the chief of the Apostles, not, certainly, in the sense of exercising any supremacy and absolute control over them,—as dictating to their consciences,—as finally deciding all cases of doubt—or as claiming any right to interfere in the Churches other Apostles had founded, (See Gal. ii. 7—9 and 11—14,) but as the chief in dignity; taking precedence of the rest, and acting as President, Chairman, or Speaker in their meetings. Peter, and James, and John, and sometimes Peter, and James,—always with Peter placed foremost, were certainly distinguished, as appears from numerous passages in the Gospels,^o from the rest of the Apostles. He was apparently the chief Spokesman on the day of Pentecost, when the *Jewish* Believers were first called on to unite themselves into a Church; and he was the chosen instrument in founding the first Church of the (“devout”) *Gentiles*, opening the door of the Kingdom of Heaven to Cornelius and his friends.

I need hardly add, that to claim on that account for Peter’s supposed *successors* such supreme jurisdiction over the whole Church-universal, as he himself neither exercised nor claimed, would be most extravagant. And to speak of a *succession* of men, as being, each, a *foundation* on which the Church is built, is not only extravagant, but unmeaning.

admission into the Society from time to time, to such as they judged qualified.^u

And that this Society or Church—Christian Church the Kingdom of Heaven. was “that Kingdom of Heaven” of which the keys were committed to them, and which they had before proclaimed as “at hand,” they could not doubt. They could not have been in any danger of cherishing any such presumptuous dream, as that they or any one else, except their divine Master, could have power to give or refuse admittance to the mansions of immortal bliss.

On the whole then, one who reads the Scriptures with attention and with candour, will be at no loss, I conceive, to ascertain, what was the sense, generally, in which our Lord’s Disciples would understand his directions and injunctions. Besides what is implied, naturally and necessarily, in the very institution of a Community, we know also, what the instructions were which the Disciples had already been accustomed to receive from their Master, and what was the sense they had been used from childhood to attach to the expressions He employed. And as we may be sure, I think, how *they* would understand his words, so, we may be equally sure that He would not have *failed to undeceive* them,

^u σωζομένους, rendered in our version “such as should be saved;” by which our Translators probably meant, according to the idiom of their day, (which is the true sense of the original) “persons entering on the road of salvation.”

had they mistaken his real meaning ; which therefore, we cannot doubt, must have been that which these Disciples apprehended.

Procedure
of the Dis-
ciples in
conformity
to their
Master's
directions.

§ 8. As for the mode in which the Apostles and other early Christian Ministers carried into effect the directions they had received, we have indeed but a few, and those generally scanty and incidental, notices in the sacred writers ; but all the notices we do find, go to confirm—if confirmation could be wanted—what has been just said, as to the sense in which our Lord must have been understood—and, consequently, in which He must have *meant* to be understood—by his Disciples.

And among the important facts which we can collect and fully ascertain from the sacred historians, scanty and irregular and imperfect as are their records of particulars, one of the most important is, *that very scantiness* and incompleteness in the detail ;—that absence of any full and systematic description of the formation and regulation of Christian Communities, that has been just noticed. For we may plainly infer, from this very circumstance, the design of the Holy Spirit, that those details, concerning which no precise directions, accompanied with strict injunctions, are to be found in Scripture, were meant to be left to the regulation of each Church,

in each Age and Country. On any point in which it was designed that all Christians should be, every where, and at all times, bound as strictly as the Jews were to the Levitical Law, we may fairly conclude they would have received directions no less precise, and descriptions no less minute, than had been afforded to the Jews.

It has often occurred to my mind that the generality of even studious readers are apt, for want of sufficient reflection, to fail of drawing such important inferences as they often might, from the *omissions* occurring in any work they are perusing ;—from its *not* containing such and such things relative to the subject treated of. There are many cases in which the non-insertion of some particulars which, under other circumstances, we might have calculated on meeting with, in a certain book, will be hardly less instructive than the things we do meet with.

Importance
of noticing
the omis-
sions in any
work.

And this is much more especially the case when we are studying works which we believe to have been composed under Divine guidance. For, in the case of mere human compositions, one may conceive an author to have left out some important circumstances, either through error of judgment or inadvertency, or from having written merely for the use of a particular class of readers in his own time and country,

without any thought of what might be necessary information for persons at a distance and in after-ages ; but we cannot, of course, attribute to any such causes omissions in the *inspired* Writers.

The Sacred
Writers su-
pernatu-
rally with-
held from
recording
some
things.

On no supposition whatever can we account for the omission, by all of them, of many points which they do omit, and of their scanty and slight mention of others, except by considering them as withheld by the express design and will (whether *communicated* to each of them or not) of their Heavenly Master, restraining them from committing to writing many things which, naturally, some or other of them, at least, would not have failed so to record.

I have set forth accordingly, in a distinct treatise,^{*} these views respecting the *Omissions* in the Sacred Books of the New Testament, and the important inferences thence to be deduced. We seek in vain there for many things which, humanly speaking, we should have most surely calculated on finding. “No such thing is to be found in our Scriptures as a Catechism, or regular *Elementary Introduction* to the Christian Religion ; nor do they furnish us with any thing of the nature of a Systematic Creed, set of Articles, Confession of Faith, or by whatever other name one may designate a regular, complete Compendium of Christian doctrines : nor, again,

^{*} Essay VI., First Series. See Appendix, Note (D.)

do they supply us with a Liturgy for ordinary Public Worship, or with Forms for administering the Sacraments, or for conferring Holy Orders; nor do they even give any precise *directions* as to these and other ecclesiastical matters;—any thing that at all corresponds to a Rubric, or set of Canons.”

Now these omissions present,—as I have, in that Treatise, endeavoured to show,—a complete moral demonstration that the Apostles and their followers must have been *supernaturally withheld* from recording great part of the institutions, instructions, and regulations, which must, in point of fact, have proceeded from them;—withheld, *on purpose* that other Churches, in other Ages and Regions, might not be led to consider themselves bound to adhere to several formularies, customs, and rules, that were of local and temporary appointment; but might be left to their own discretion in matters in which it seemed best to Divine wisdom that they should be so left.^y

§ 9. With respect to one class of those points that have been alluded to, it is probable that one cause—humanly speaking—why we find in the Sacred Books less information concerning the Christian Min-

Christian
Churches
derived
from Syna-
gogues.

^y See Appendix, Note (D.)

istry and the Constitution of Church-Governments than we otherwise might have found, is that these institutions had less of *novelty* than some would at first sight suppose, and that many portions of them did not wholly originate with the Apostles. It appears highly probable—I might say morally certain²—that wherever a Jewish Synagogue existed that was brought,—the whole or the chief part of it,—to embrace the Gospel, the Apostles did not, there, so much *form* a Christian Church, (or Congregation;^a Ecclesia,) as *make an existing Congregation Christian*; by introducing the Christian Sacraments and Worship, and establishing whatever regulations were requisite for the newly-adopted Faith; leaving the machinery (if I may so speak) of government, unchanged; the “Rulers of Synagogues, Elders, and other Officers (whether spiritual or ecclesiastical, or both) being already provided in the existing institutions. And it is likely that several of the earliest Christian Churches did originate in this way; that is, that they were *converted Synagogues*; which became

* See Lightfoot, Appendix, Note (C.)

^a The word “*Congregation*,” as it stands in our Version of the Old Testament, (and it is one of very frequent occurrence in the Books of Moses,) is found to correspond, in the Septuagint, which was familiar to the New-Testament Writers, to Ecclesia; the word which, in our Version of these last, is always rendered—not “*Congregation*,” but “*Church*.” This, or its equivalent “*Kirk*,” is probably no other than “*circle* ;” *i. e.* Assembly, Ecclesia.

Christian Churches as soon as the members, or the main part of the members, acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah.

The attempt to effect this conversion of a Jewish Synagogue into a Christian Church, seems always to have been made, in the first instance, in every place where there was an opening for it. Even after the call of the idolatrous Gentiles, it appears plainly to have been the practice of the Apostles Paul and Barnabas,^b when they came to any city in which there was a Synagogue, to go thither first and deliver their sacred message to the Jews and “devout (or proselyte) Gentiles;”—according to their own expression, (Acts xiii. 16,) to the “men of Israel and those *that feared*

Precedence
allowed to
the Jews.

^b These seem to be the first who are employed in converting the *idolatrous* Gentiles to Christianity,* and their first considerable harvest among these seems to have been at Antioch in Pisidia, as may be seen by any one who attentively reads the 13th Chapter of Acts. Peter was sent to Cornelius, a “*devout*” Gentile;—one of those who had renounced idolatry and frequented the Synagogues. And these seem to have been regarded by him as in an especial manner his particular charge. His Epistles appear to have been addressed to them; as may be seen both by the general tenor of his expression,† and especially in the opening address which is not (as would appear from our Version) to the dispersed *Jews*, but to the “Sojourners of the dispersion,” *παρεπιδήμονες διασπορας*, i.e. the *devout Gentiles living among* the “Dispersion.”

* See Barrington’s *Miscellanea Sacra*.

† See Hinds’s *History*, vol. ii.

God :” adding, that “it was necessary that the Word of God should first be preached to them.”

And when they founded a Church in any of those cities in which (and such were, probably, a very large majority) there was no Jewish Synagogue that received the Gospel, it is likely they would still conform, in a great measure, to the same model.

New direc-
tions need-
ed even for
converted
Syna-
gogues.

But though, as has been said, the circumstance just mentioned was probably the cause—humanly speaking—why some particulars are not recorded in our existing Sacred Books, which otherwise we might have found there, still, it does seem to me perfectly incredible on any supposition but that of supernatural interference, that neither the Apostles nor any of their many followers should have committed to writing any of the multitude of particulars which we do *not* find in Scripture, and concerning which we are perfectly certain the Apostles did give instructions, relative to Church-Government, the Christian Ministry, and Public-Worship. When we consider how large a proportion of the Churches and of the ministers were Gentiles and strangers to the constitution of Jewish Synagogues, and also how much was introduced that was new and strange, even to Jewish Christians (as well as highly important)—the Christian Sacraments being wholly new, and the Prayers

in a great measure so—we may judge how great a number of particular directions must have been indispensably necessary for all ;—directions which it would have been natural, humanly speaking, for the Apostles or their attendants to have recorded in writing ; and which, if this had not been done, would naturally have been so recorded by the persons to whom they were delivered. “ Suppose we could make out the possibility or probability, of Paul’s having left no Creed, Catechism, or Canons, why have we none from the pen of Luke, or of Mark ? Suppose this also explained, why did not John or Peter supply the deficiency ? And why again did none of the numerous Bishops and Presbyters whom they ordained, undertake the work under their direction ?”^c “ And that there is nothing in the Christian Religion considered in itself, that stands in the way of such a procedure, is plain from the number of works of this description which have appeared from the earliest times, (*after the age of inspiration*) down to the present ;—from the writings entitled the ‘ Apostles’ Creed,’ and the ‘ Apostolical Constitutions,’ &c. (compositions of uncertain authors, and, amidst the variety of opinions respecting them, never regarded as Scripture) down to the modern Formularies and Confes-

^c Essay on Omissions, p. 19.

sions of Faith. Nor again can it be said that there was any thing in the *founders* of the religion any more than in the religion itself, which, humanly speaking, should seem likely to preclude them from transmitting to us such compositions. On the contrary, the Apostles, and the rest of the earlier preachers of Christianity, were brought up Jews ; accustomed in their earliest notions of religion, to refer to the Books of the Law, as containing precise statements of their Belief, and most minute directions as to religious Worship and Ceremonies. So that to give complete and regular instructions as to the character and the requisitions of the new Religion, as it would have been natural, for any one, was more especially to be expected of these men."^d

We are left then, and indeed unavoidably led, to the conclusion that in respect of these points the Apostles and their followers were, during the age of inspiration, supernaturally withheld from recording these circumstantial details which were not intended by divine Providence to be absolutely binding on all Churches, in every Age and Country, but were meant to be left to the discretion of each particular Church.^e

^d Essay on Omissions, pp. 7, 8.

^e See some valuable remarks on this subject, in a pamphlet by Dean Hoare, entitled " Letters on the Tendency and Principles advocated in the ' Tracts for the Times.' "

§ 10. The absence of such detailed descriptions and instructions as I have been adverting to, is the more striking when contrasted with the earnest and frequent inculcations we do meet with, of the great fundamental Gospel-doctrines and moral duties, which are dwelt upon in so many passages, both generally and in reference to various classes of persons, and various occasions. Our sacred writers have not recorded their Creeds,—their Catechisms for the elementary instruction of Converts,—their forms of Public Prayer and Psalmody,—or their modes of administering the Sacraments;—they have not even described the posture in which the Eucharist was received, or the use of leavened or unleavened Bread; (two points on which, in after-ages, bitter controversies were raised,) nor many other things which we are certain Paul (as well as the other Apostles) “set in order, when he came” to each Church.

But, on the other hand, it is plainly recorded that they did establish Churches wherever they introduced the Gospel; that they “ordained Elders in every city,” and that the Apostles again delegated that office to others; that they did administer the right of Baptism to their converts; and that they celebrated the communion of the Lord’s Supper. And besides the general prin-

Scanty records of what relates to Church-government, and copious, of moral and doctrinal instructions

Clear records of the fact that Christian Churches were founded.

ciples of Christian Faith and Morality which they sedulously set forth, they have recorded the most earnest exhortations to avoid “confusion”^f in their public worship; to do “all things decently and in order;” to “let all things be done to edifying,” and not for vain-glorious display; they inculcate the duty of Christians “assembling themselves together” for joint worship;^g they record distinctly the solemn sanction given to a Christian Community; they inculcate^b due reverence and obedience to those that “bear rule” in such a Community, with censure of such as “walk disorderly” and “cause divisions;” and they dwell earnestly on the care with which Christian Ministers, both male and female, should be selected, and on the zeal, and discretion, and blameless life required in them, and on their solemn obligation to “exhort, rebuke, and admonish:” yet with all this, they do not record even the number of distinct Orders of them, or the functions appropriated to each, or the degree, and kind, and mode, of control they exercised in the Churches.

Principles
which are
to guide
Christian
Societies
clearly re-
corded.

While the *principles*, in short, are clearly recognised, and strongly inculcated, which Christian Communities and individual members of them are to

^f 1 Cor. and 1 Tim.

^g Heb. x. 25.

^b See Hebrews and Timothy.

keep in mind and act upon, with a view to the great objects for which these Communities were established, the *precise modes* in which these objects are, in each case, to be promoted, are left,—one can hardly doubt, studiously left—undefined.

§ 11. Many of the omissions I have alluded to, will appear even the more striking in proportion as we contemplate with the more minute attention each part of the sacred narrative. For instance, it is worth remarking that the matters concerning which the Apostle Paul's Epistles do contain the most detailed directions, are most of them precisely those which every one perceives to have relation only to the times in which he wrote; such as the eating or abstaining from "meats offered to idols," and the use and abuse of supernatural gifts. He was left, it should seem, *unrestrained* in recording—and hence he does record,—particular directions in *those cases where there was no danger* of those his directions being applied in *all* Ages and Countries, as binding on *every* Church *for ever*. Again, almost every attentive reader must have been struck with the circumstance, that there is no such description on record of the first appointment of the higher Orders of Christian Ministers as there is (in Acts vi.) of the ordination of the *inferior*

Remarkable circumstances in the matters of detail which the Scriptures do record.

Class, the Deacons. And this consideration alone would lead a reflecting mind to conclude, or at least strongly suspect, that the particular notice of this appointment of Deacons is *incidental* only, and that probably there would have been as little said of these, as of the Presbyters, but for the circumstance of the extraordinary effect produced by two of these Deacons, Stephen and Philip, as preachers: the narrative of their appointment being a natural, and almost necessary, introduction to that of two most important events, the great outbreak of persecution consequent on Stephen's martyrdom (which seems to have led, through the dispersion of the Disciples, to the founding of the first purely Gentile Church, (at Antioch),¹ and the conversion of Samaria.

The Seven
Deacons
not the first
appointed.

But this conclusion is greatly strengthened, when, on a closer examination, we find reason to be convinced that these, so-called, first seven Deacons, who are usually assumed (for I never met with even any attempt at proof,) to have been the first that ever held such an office, were, in reality, only the first Grecian^k Deacons, and that there were *Hebrew* Deacons before.

¹ See Encyclop. Metrop. (Ecclesiastical History) on the designation of Christians first given to the Disciples at that place.

^k Hellenist, or "Grecian," is the term constantly used for the *Jews* who used the Greek *language*; as distinguished from Hellen, a *Greek* or Gentile by *nation*.

The following extract from an able Article in the Encyclopædia Metropolitana on Ecclesiastical History, will make this point, I think, perfectly clear.

“Meanwhile within the Church itself were displayed some slight symptoms of discontent, which deserve to be noticed particularly, on account of the measure to which they gave rise. The complaint is called ‘a murmuring of the Grecians (or foreign Jews) against the Hebrews, (or native Jews,) because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.’ Who these widows probably were has already been suggested; and if the suggestion, that they were deaconesses, be admitted, the grounds of the complaint may be readily surmised. As the greater share of duty would at this time devolve on the Hebrew widows or deaconesses, they might have been paid more liberally, as their services seemed to require, and hence the discontent.

“This, it is true, supposes that the order of deacons and deaconesses already existed, and may seem at first to contradict the statement of St. Luke, that in consequence of this murmuring, deacons were appointed. It does not however really contradict it; for evidently some *dispensers* there must have been, and if so, either the Apostles must have officiated as deacons, or special deacons there must have been, by what-

ever name they went. That the Apostles did not officiate, is plain from the tenor of the narrative, which indicates that the appeal was made to them, and that they excused themselves from presiding personally at the 'ministration,' (as was probably desired by the discontented party,) alleging that it was incompatible with their proper duties. 'It is not reason that we should *leave the word of God*, and serve tables.' This very assertion, then, is proof certain that they did not officiate. Again, on reading over the names of the seven deacons, we find them all of the Grecian or Hellenistic party. Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, the last of whom is expressly described as a proselyte of Antioch. Now this surely would have produced, in turn, a murmuring of the Hebrews against the Grecians, unless they had *already* had some in office interested in looking after their rights. With these presumptions in favour of a previous appointment of deacons, it would seem then, that these seven were *added* to the former number, because of the complaint.

"All that is thus far intimated of their office is, that they were employed in the daily distribution of the alms and the stipends due from the public fund. Whether, even at the first, their duties were limited to this department of

service, may be reasonably doubted. Of this portion of their duties we are now informed ; obviously, because to the unsatisfactory mode in which this had been hitherto performed it was owing, that the new appointment took place, and that the subject was noticed at all. It is, however, by no means improbable, that the young men who carried out the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, and who are described as ‘ready’ in attendance, were of the same order ; in other words, deacons by office, if not by name. What may serve to confirm this view of it is, the opposition between what would seem to have been their original title, and another order in the Church. They are called ‘juniors’ and ‘young men,’ (*νεώτεροι* and *νεανίσκοι*,) terms so strongly opposed to presbyters or elders, as to incline one at the first glance to consider them as expressive of the two orders of the ministry, the seniors and the juniors, the *πρεσβύτεροι διάκονοι* and the *νεώτεροι διάκονοι* ; the two orders, in short, which at length received the fixed and perpetual titles of presbyters and deacons.

“Accordingly, there is no just ground for supposing, that when the same term deacon occurs in the Epistles of St. Paul, a different order of men is intended ; first, because an office may preserve its original name long after the duties originally attached to it have been

changed ; and, secondly, because, whatever duties may have been added to the office of deacons, it is certain that the duty of attending to the poor was for several centuries attached to it. Even after the deacons ceased to hold the office of treasurers, and the Bishops began to receive the revenues of their respective sees, the distribution of that portion which was allotted to charity still passed through the hands of the deacons. Hence in a still later period, the title of cardinal deacon ; and hence, too, the appropriation of the term *diaconiæ* to those Churches wherein alms used to be collected and distributed to the poor.

“ Not that it is possible to point out, with any thing like precision, the course of duty which belonged to the primitive deacons. That it corresponded entirely with that of our present order of deacons is very unlikely, whatever analogy be allowed from their relative situation in the Church. As the Church during the greater part of the first century was a shifting, and progressive institution, their duties probably underwent continual change and modification. If we were to be guided, for instance, by the office in which we find the “ young men,” *νεανίσχοι*, engaged when the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira were removed, we should say that they performed the business, which in the present day would devolve on the inferior

attendants of our churches. If, again, we were to judge of their character from the occasion on which we find them acting as stewards of the Church fund, a higher station would be doubtless assigned to them, but still, one not more nearly connected with the ministry of the word, nor approaching more to the sphere of duty which belongs to our deacons. On the other hand, the instances of Stephen and Philip prove, that the title was applied to those who were engaged in the higher departments of the ministry, although not in the highest.

“After all, it is most likely that the word deacon was originally applied, as its etymology suggests, to all the *ministers* of the Gospel establishment. But the Apostles having from the first a specific title, it more properly denoted any minister inferior to them,—any, however employed in the *service* of the Church. Between these, also, there soon obtained a distinction. If we suppose, then, that the *seniors*, or superior class, were distinguished by the obvious title of elder deacons, (πρεσβύτεροι διάκονοι) the generic and unappropriated term “deacon” would devolve on the remaining class. And thus the present order in the Church, to which that name is applied, may be truly asserted to be deacons in the apostolical and primitive sense of the word; and yet, nevertheless, much may be said about deacons, both in the New Testa-

ment and in the writings of the early fathers, which will not apply to them."

If any one should be disposed to think it a question of small moment whether Stephen and his companions were or were not the first Deacons ever appointed, let him consider that, however unimportant in itself, it is one which throws much additional light on the subject now before us. We not only find few and scanty records of those details of the Church-government established by the Apostles, which, if they had designed to leave a model absolutely binding on all Christians for ever, we might have expected to find fully and clearly particularized, but also we find that a part even of what the inspired writers do record, is recorded incidentally only, for the elucidation of the rest of the narrative ; and not in pursuance of any design to give a detailed statement of such particulars. Thus a further confirmation is furnished of the view that has been taken ; viz. that it was the plan of the Sacred Writers to lay down clearly the *principles* on which Christian Churches were to be formed and governed, leaving the mode of application of those principles undetermined and discretionary.

Internal
evidence of
the Gospel
resulting
from the
above
views.

§ 12. Now what did the Holy Spirit design us to learn from all this ? In the first place " he that hath ears to hear," may draw from it, as has been al-

ready observed, a strong internal evidence of the genuineness, and of the inspired character, of our Sacred Books ; inasmuch as they do not contain what would surely have been found in the works of men (whether impostors or sincere) left to themselves to record whatever seemed interesting and important.

And this point of evidence presents itself to the mind at once, before we have even begun to inquire into the particular object proposed in the omission ; because we may be sure, in this case, that what did *not* come from Man must have come from God.¹

But besides this we may fairly infer
 I think that what is *essential* is to be
 found clearly laid down in Scripture ;
 and that those points which are either
 wholly passed over in silence (when they are
 such that we are certain from the nature of the
 case, the Apostles must have given *some* direc-
 tions relative to them) or are slightly mentioned,
 imperfectly described, and incidentally alluded
 to, must belong to the class of things either al-
 together indifferent, or so far nonessential in
 their character, that “it is not necessary” (as
 our 34th Article expresses it,) “they should be
 in all places one and utterly alike ;”—such in
 short that Divine Wisdom judged it best they

Of Essen-
 tials a dis-
 tinct reve-
 lation in
 Scripture to
 be expect-
 ed.

¹ See Appendix, Note (E.)

should be left to the discretion of each Church in each Age and Country,^m and should be determined according to the *principles* which had been distinctly laid down by Divine Authority; while the *application* of those principles in particular cases, was left (as is the case with our moral conduct also)ⁿ to the responsible judgment of Man.

Extent and limits of the power of a Church.

It was designed in short that a Church should have (as our 34th Article expresses it) “authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies and rites resting on Man’s authority only;” (this, be it observed, including things which may have been enjoined by the Apostles *to those among whom they were living*, and which *to those persons* had a divine authority; but which are not recorded by the sacred writers as enjoined *universally*) “so that all things be done to edifying:” but that “as no Church ought to decree any thing *against* Holy Writ, so *besides* the same ought it not to enforce the belief of any thing as necessary to Salvation.”

Things enjoined, things excluded, and things left at large.

§ 13. And we may also infer very clearly from an attentive and candid survey of the Sacred Writings, not only that some things were intended to be absolutely enjoined as essential, and others left to the dis-

^m See Appendix, Note (F.)

ⁿ Essay on Abolition of Law. Second Series.

cretion of the rulers of each Church, but also that some things, again, were absolutely *excluded*, as inconsistent with the character of a Christian Community.

It is very important therefore, and to a diligent, and reflective, and unprejudiced reader, not difficult,—by observing what the Sacred Writers have omitted, and what they have mentioned, and in what manner they have mentioned each, to form in his mind distinctly the three classes just alluded to : viz. 1st, of things essential to Christianity, and *en-* Points essential, incompatible, and indifferent. *joined* as universally requisite ; 2dly, those left to the *discretion* of the governors of each Church ; and 3dly, those *excluded* as *inconsistent* with the character of the Gospel-religion.

These last points are not least deserving of a careful examination ; especially on account of the misconceptions relative to them, that have prevailed and still prevail, in a large portion of the Christian World. It would lead me too far from the subject now immediately under consideration, to enter into a full examination of all the features that are to be found in most religions except the Christian, and which might have been expected to appear in that, supposing it of human origin ; but which are expressly excluded from it. It may be worth while however to advert to a few of the most remarkable.

Temporal
sanctions
succeeded
by those of
a future
state.

The Christian Religion, then, arose, be it remembered, among a People who not only looked for a temporal Deliverer and Prince in their Messiah, but who had been accustomed to the sanction of temporal rewards and judgments to the divine Law;°—whose Laws, in religious and in secular matters alike, claimed to be an immediate revelation from Heaven—whose civil Rulers were regarded as delegates from “the Lord their God, who was their king,” and were enjoined to punish with death, as a revolt from the Supreme Civil Authority,—as a crime of the character of high-treason,—any departure from the prescribed religion. It arose in a Nation regarding themselves as subjects of a “Kingdom of God” that *was*, emphatically, a kingdom of this world: and its most prominent character was its being “a Kingdom *not* of this world:” it was in all respects the very reverse in respect of the points just mentioned, or what *might* have been expected, humanly-speaking, from Jewish individuals, and of what *was* expected by the Jewish Nation; and it may be added, of what many Christians have in every Age laboured to represent and to make it. While the mass

° See Essay I., 1st Series: “On the Peculiarities,” &c. And also Discourse “On National Blessings.”

of his own People were seeking to “take Jesus by force to make Him a King” (a procedure which has been, virtually, imitated by a large proportion of his professed followers ever since) He Himself and his Apostles, uniformly and sedulously, both in their precepts, and in their conduct, rejected as alien from the character of the Gospel, all employment of secular coercion in behalf of their religion,—all encroachment on “the things that be Cæsar’s;” and maintained the purely spiritual character of that “Kingdom of Heaven” which they proclaimed.

On this every way most important point, I have treated at large in the first Essay in this volume, and also, in the Essay on Persecution (3d Series), and the Essays on the Dangers to Christianity, (4th Series.)

§ 14. Moreover the Gospel-religion was introduced by men,—whether Jews or Gentiles,—who had never heard of or conceived such a thing as a religion without a Sacrificing *Priest*,—without Altars for *Sacrifice*,—without *Sacrifices* themselves,—without either a *Temple*, or at least some High Place, Grove, or other sacred spot answering to a Temple; or some place, that is, in which

Christianity a religion without Sacrifice, Altar or Temple.

the Deity worshipped was supposed more especially to dwell.^p

The Apostles preached, for the first time—the first, both to Jew and Gentile—a religion quite opposite in all these respects to all that had ever been heard of before:—a religion without any Sacrifice but that offered up by its Founder in his own person;—without any Sacrificing Priest (Hiereus)^q except Him, the great and true High Priest,^r and consequently with no Priest (in that sense) on Earth; except so far as every one of the worshippers was required to present himself as a “living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God;”^s and a religion without any Temple, except the collected Congregation of the Worshippers themselves.^t

Let any one but contemplate the striking contrast, between the confined—the local character,—of the Mosaic system, and the character

^p Hence the name of *Naōs* from *ναίειν*, “to dwell.” See Hinds’s “Three Temples.”

^q See Discourse “On the Christian Priesthood,” appended to Bampton Lectures.

^r Hebrews, ch. iv.

^s Rom. xii. This offering the Apostle calls *θυσίαν ζῶσαν*, “a living Sacrifice,” as distinguished from the *slain* animals offered up in other religions; and also *λογικὴ λατρεία*, “a *reasonable* service,” as opposed to the *irrational* animals slain on the altars.

^t I have treated of this point in one of a volume of Discourses delivered in Dublin.

of boundless extension stamped on the Gospel of Christ. "In the place which the Lord shall choose" (says Moses^u) "to set his Name therein, there shalt thou offer thy Sacrifices." "The hour cometh" (says Jesus^x) when men shall neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father:" "whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."^y "In his *Temple*" (says the Psalmist;^z *i. e.* in his temple at Jerusalem) "doth every one speak of his glory:" "there will I" (Jehovah) "*dwell*, for I have a delight therein;" "Ye are the *Temple*" (says the Apostle Paul) "of the Holy Ghost, which *dwelleth* in you."^a

Now all this is deserving of attentive reflection, both as important in reference to a right knowledge of the true character of the religion of the Gospel, and also as furnishing a strong internal evidence as to its origin. For not only is it inconceivable that any impostor or enthusiast would have ever *devised* or dreamed of any thing both so strange, and so unacceptable, as must have seemed, in those days, a religion without Priest, Altar, Sacrifice, or Temple, (in the sense in which men had always

Christianity such a system as Man would not have devised, nor could have succeeded in propagating.

^u Deut. xii.^x John iv.^y Matt. xviii.^z Ps. xxix.^a 1 Cor. iii.

been accustomed to them;) but also it is no less incredible that any persons unaided by miraculous powers, should have *succeeded*—as the Apostles did—in propagating such a religion.

Sacrifices
and sacri-
ficing
Priests, *ex-
cluded from
Christian-
ity.*

But what is most to our present purpose to remark, is, that the Sacred Writers did not *omit* the mention of these things, and leave it to the discretion of each Church to introduce them or not; but they plainly appear to have distinctly *excluded* them. It is not that they made little or no mention of Temples, Sacrifices, and sacrificing Priests; they mention them, and allude to them, perpetually; as existing, in the ordinary sense of the terms, among the Jews, and also among the Pagans; and again they also perpetually mention and allude to them in reference to the religion of the Gospel, invariably, and manifestly, *in a different sense*. Jesus Christ as the Christian Priest and Christian Sacrifice,—Christians themselves as “living Sacrifices,”—the Sacrifice of beneficence to the Poor,^b—the Temple composed of the Christian Worshippers themselves; who are exhorted to “build up” (or edify, *οἰκοδομεῖν*) one another, as “living stones”^c of the Temple of the Holy Ghost;—all these are spoken of and alluded to continually;

^b “To do good and to distribute, forget not, for with such sacrifices, (*θυσίαις*,) God is well pleased.”

^c 1 Peter ii. 5, &c.

while, in the primary and customary sense, the same terms are perpetually used by the same writers, in reference to the Jewish and to the Pagan religions, and never to the Christian.

I cannot well conceive any proof more complete than is here afforded, that Christ and his Apostles intended distinctly to exclude and forbid, as inconsistent with his religion, those things which I have been speaking of. It being the natural and inherent office of any Community to make bye-laws for its own regulation, *where not restricted by some higher Authority*, these points are precisely those which come under that restriction; being distinctly excluded by the Founder and Supreme Governor of the Universal Church as inconsistent with the character of his Religion.

It is not a little remarkable, therefore,—though in other matters also experience shows the liability of men to maintain at once opposite errors,—that the very persons who are for restricting within the narrowest limits,—or rather, indeed, annulling altogether,—the natural right of a community to make and alter bye-laws in matters not determined by a superior authority, and who deny that any Church is at liberty to depart, even in matters left wholly undecided in Scripture, from the supposed,—or even con-

Unreasonable restriction, and unreasonable extension of Church-powers, advocated by the same persons.

jectured—practice of the Apostles, these very persons are found advocating the introduction into Christianity of practices and institutions not only unauthorized, but plainly excluded, by its inspired promulgators;—such as Sacrifices and sacrificing Priests; thus, at once, denying the rights which do belong to a Christian Community, and asserting those which do not; at once fettering the Church by a supposed obligation to conform strictly to some supposed precedents of antiquity, and boldly casting off the obligation to adhere to the plainest injunctions of God's written Word. "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."^d

The Christian Church
universal
has no Spiritual Head
on Earth.

§ 15. Among the things excluded from the Christian system, we are fully authorized to include all subjection of the Christian World, permanently, and from generation to generation, to some one Spiritual Ruler (whether an individual man, or a Church) the delegate, representative and vicegerent of Christ; whose authority should be binding on the conscience of all, and decisive on every point of faith. Jesus Himself, who told his Disciples that it was "expedient for them that He should go away, that He might send them

^d Mark vii. 9.

another Comforter, who should abide with them for ever," could not possibly have failed, had such been his design, to refer them to the man, or Body of men, who should, in perpetual succession, be the depositary of this divine consolation and supremacy. And it is wholly incredible that He Himself should be perpetually spoken of and alluded to as the Head of his Church, without any reference to any supreme Head on Earth, as fully representing Him and bearing universal rule in his name,—whether Peter or any other Apostle, or any successor of one of these,—this, I say, is utterly incredible, supposing the Apostles or their Master had really designed that there should be for the universal Church any institution answering to the oracle of God under the Old Dispensation, at the Tabernacle or the Temple.

The Apostle Paul, in speaking of miracles as "the signs of an Apostle," evidently implies that no one NOT possessing such miraculous gifts as his,^e much less, without possessing any at all,—could be entitled to be regarded as even on a level with the Apostles; yet he does not, by virtue of that his high office, claim for himself, or allow to Peter or any other, supreme rule over all the Churches.^f And while he

The miraculous Signs of an Apostle requisite for any claimant of apostolical power.

^e 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

^f Gal. ii. 7—9.

claims and exercises the right to decide authoritatively on points of faith and of practice on which he had received express revelations, he does not leave his converts any injunction to apply, hereafter, when he shall be removed from them, to the Bishop or Rulers of any other Church, for such decisions; or to any kind of permanent living oracle to dictate to all Christians in all Ages. Nor does he even ever hint at any subjection of one Church to another, singly, or to any number of others collectively;—to that of Jerusalem for instance, or of Rome; or to any kind of general Council.

No one Community on Earth possessing power over all Christians. It appears plainly from the sacred narrative, that though the many Churches which the Apostles founded were branches of one *Spiritual* Brotherhood, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Heavenly Head,—though there was “one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,” for all of them, yet they were each a distinct, independent community *on Earth*, united by the common principles on which they were founded, and by their mutual agreement, affection, and respect; but not having any one recognised Head on Earth, or acknowledging any sovereignty of one of these Societies over others.[§]

§ Generally speaking, the Apostles appear to have clearly established a distinct Church in each considerable city; so that there were several even in a single Province; as for instance, in Macedo-

And as for—so-called—General Councils, we find not even any mention of them, or allusion to any such expedient. The pretended first Council, at Jerusalem, does seem to me^h a most extraordinary chimera, without any warrant whatever from Sacred History.

General
Councils
not autho-
rized by
Scripture.

We find in the narrative, that certain persons, coming from Jerusalem to Antioch, endeavoured to impose on the Gentile converts the yoke of the Mosaic Law; pretending—as appears plainly from the contextⁱ—to have the sanction of the Apostles for this. Nothing could be more natural than the step which was thereupon taken, —to send a deputation to Jerusalem, to inquire whether these pretensions were well founded. The Apostles, in the midst of an Assembly of the Elders (or Clergy, as they would now be called) of Jerusalem, decided that no such burden ought to be imposed, and that their pretended sanction had not been given. The Church at Jerusalem, even independently of the Apostles, had of course, power to decide this last point; *i. e.* to declare the fact whether they had or had not given the pretended sanction: and the Apostles, confessedly, had plena-

nia, those of Philippi, Thessalonica, Beræa, Amphipolis, &c.: and the like in the Province of Achaia, and elsewhere.

^h See Burnet on Article 21.

ⁱ Acts xv. 24.

ry power to declare the will of the Lord Jesus.

Pretended first general Council, not of that character. And the deputation, accordingly, retired satisfied. There is no hint, throughout, of any summons to the several Churches in Judea and Galilee, in Samaria, Cyprus, Cyrene, &c. to send deputations, as to a general Council; nor any assumption of a right in the *Church* of Jerusalem, as such, to govern the rest, or to decide on points of faith.

Ordination of Saul and Barnabas. It is worth remarking also, that, as if on purpose to guard against the assumption, which might, not unnaturally, have taken place, of some supremacy—such as no Church was designed to enjoy,—on the part of Jerusalem, the fountain-head of the religion, it was by the *special appointment* of the Holy Spirit that Saul and Barnabas were *ordained* to the very highest office, the Apostleship, *not* by the hands of *the other Apostles*, or of any persons at *Jerusalem*, but by the *Elders of Antioch*. This would have been the less remarkable had *no human* ordination at all taken place, but merely a special immediate appointment of them by divine revelation. But the command given was, “separate me . . . let them go.”^k Some reason for such a procedure there must have been; and it does seem probable that it was designed for the very purpose (among others) of impress-

^k Acts xiii. 2, 3.

ing on men's minds the independence and equality of the several Churches on Earth.

On the whole, then, considering in addition to all these circumstances, the number and the variety of the Epistles of Paul, (to say nothing of those of the other Apostles) and the deep anxiety he manifests for the continuance of his converts in the right faith, and his earnest warnings of them¹ against the dangers to their faith, which he foresaw; and considering also the incalculable importance of such an institution (supposing it to exist) as a permanent living oracle and supreme Ruler of the Church, on Earth; and the necessity of pointing it out so clearly that no one could possibly, except through wilful blindness and obstinacy, be in any doubt as to the place and persons whom the Lord should have thus "chosen to cause his name to dwell" therein—especially, as a plain reference to this infallible judge, guide, and governor, would have been so obvious, easy, short, and decisive a mode of guarding against the doubts, errors, and dissensions which he so anxiously apprehended;—considering, I say, all this, it does seem to me a perfect moral impossibility, that Paul and the other sacred writers should have written, as they have done, with-

Impossibility of Paul's having omitted to notice a supreme universal tribunal, had there been any.

¹ Acts xx.

out any mention or allusion to any thing of the kind, if it had been a part (and it must have been a most *essential* part, if it were any) of the Christian System. They do not merely omit all reference to any supreme and infallible Head and Oracle of the Universal Church,—to any Man or Body, as the representative and Vicegerent of Christ, but they omit it in such a manner, and under such circumstances, as plainly to amount to an exclusion.

Commence-
ment of
Christian
Church;
deferred till
Christ's de-
parture. It may be added that the circumstance of our Lord's having *deferred* the Commencement of his Church till after his own *departure* in bodily person, from the Earth, seems to have been designed as a further safeguard against the notion I have been alluding to. Had He publicly presided in bodily person subsequently to the completion of the Redemption by his death, over a Church in Jerusalem or elsewhere, there would have been more plausibility in the claim to *supremacy* which might have been set up and admitted, on behalf of that Church, and of his own successors in the Government of it. His previously withdrawing, made it the more easily to be understood that He was to remain the spiritual Head in Heaven, of the spiritual Church-universal; and consequently of all particular Churches, equally, in all parts of the world.

§ 16. This therefore, and the other points just mentioned, must be regarded as *negatively* characteristic of the Christian religion, no less than it is positively characterised by those truths and those enactments which the inspired Writers lay down as essential. Their prohibitions in the one case, are as plain as their injunctions in the other.

There is not indeed any systematic enumeration of the several points that are excluded as inconsistent with the character of the religion; answering to the prohibition of Idolatry in the Decalogue, the enumeration of forbidden meats, and other such enactments of the Levitical Law. But the same may be said no less of the affirmative directions also that are to be found in the New Testament. The fundamental doctrines and the great moral principles of the Gospel, are there taught,—for wise reasons no doubt, and which I think we may in part perceive,^m not in Creeds or other regular formularies, but incidentally, irregularly, and often by oblique allusions; less striking indeed at first sight than distinct enunciations and enactments, but often even the more decisive and satisfactory from that very circumstance; because the Apostles frequently allude to some truth as not only essential, but indisputably admitted, and fami-

^m See Appendix, Note (G.)

liarily *known to be* essential by those they were addressing.ⁿ .

Certainty with which things enjoined, forbidden and discretionary, may be distinguished. On the whole then, I cannot but think an attentive and candid inquirer, who brings to the study of Scripture no extraordinary learning or acuteness, but an unprejudiced and docile mind, may ascertain with reasonable certainty, that there are points—and what those points are—which are insisted on by our sacred writers as *essential* ; and again, which are excluded as *inconsistent* with the religion they taught ; and again, that there are many other points,—some of them such that the Apostles cannot but have practically decided them in one way or another *on particular occasions*, (such as the mode of administering the Eucharist, and many others) respecting which they have not *recorded* their decisions, or made any *general* enactment to be observed in all Ages and Countries.

And the inference seems to be inevitable, that they *purposely* left these points to be decided in each Age and Country according to the discretion of the several Churches, by a careful *application* of the *principles* laid down by Christ and his Apostles.

Opposite errors at variance with the above principles.

§ 17. At variance with what has been now said, and also at variance with each other, are some opinions

ⁿ See Rhetoric, 6th Edition, Part I. ch. 2, § 4.

which are to be found among different classes of Christians, in these, as well as in former times. The opposite errors (as they appear to me to be) of those opinions, may in many instances be traced, I conceive, in great measure, to the same cause ; to the neglect, namely, of the distinction—obvious as it is to any tolerably attentive reader—which has been just noticed, between those things, on the one hand, which are either plainly declared and strictly *enjoined*, or distinctly *excluded*, by the Sacred Writers, and, on the other hand, those on which they give no distinct decision, injunction, or prohibition ; and which, I have thence concluded they meant to place under the jurisdiction of each Church. To the neglect of this distinction, and again, to a want of due consideration of the character, offices, and rights of a Christian Community, may be attributed, in a great degree, the prevalence of errors the most opposite to each other.

There are persons, it is well known, who from not finding in Scripture precise directions, and strict commands, as to the constitution and regulation of a Christian Church,—the several Orders of Christian Ministers,—the distinct functions of each,—and other such details, have adopted the conclusion,—or at least seem to lean, more or less, towards the conclusion—that it is a

Error of those who regard no Church-ordinances, &c. as binding.

matter entirely left to each individual's fancy or convenience to join one Christian Society, or another, or none at all;—to take upon himself, or confer on another, the Ministerial office, or to repudiate altogether any Christian Ministry whatever;—to join, or withdraw from, any, or every religious Assembly for joint Christian Worship, according to the suggestion of his individual taste:—in short, (for this is what it really amounts to when plainly stated) to proceed as if the sanction manifestly given by our Lord and his Apostles to the establishment of Christian Communities, and, consequently, to all the privileges and powers implied in the very nature of a Community, and also the inculcation in Scripture of the *principles* on which Christian Churches are to be conducted, were all *to go for nothing*, unless the application of these principles to each particular point of the details of Church-government, can also be found no less plainly laid down in Scripture.

Mistake of expecting precise directions on each point of detail. Now though I would not be understood as insinuating any thing against the *actual* morality of life of those who take such views, I cannot but remark, that their *mode of reasoning* does seem to me perfectly analogous to that of men who should set at nought all the moral principles of the Gospel, and account nothing a sin that is not expressly particularized as forbidden,—nothing a

duty, that is not, in so many words, enjoined. Persons who entertain such lax notions as I have been alluding to, respecting Church-enactments, should be exhorted to reflect carefully on the obvious and self-evident, but often-forgotten truth—the oftener forgotten, perhaps, in practice, from its *being* self-evident—that *right* and *duty* are reciprocal; and, consequently, that since a Church has a *right* (derived, as has been shown, both from the very nature of a Community, and from Christ’s sanction) to *make* regulations, &c. not at variance with Scripture-principles, it follows that *compliance* with such regulations must be a *duty* to the individual members of that Church.

On the other hand, there are some, who, in their abhorrence and dread of principles and practices subversive of all good order, and tending to anarchy and to every kind of extravagance, have thought,—or at least professed to think,—that we are bound to seek for a distinct authoritative sanction, in the Scriptures, or in *some other ancient^o writings*,—some *Tradition* in short—for each separate point which we would maintain. They assume that whatever doctrines or practices, whatever institutions, whatever re-

Error of those who seek in Scripture or Tradition for a sanction to each Church-enactment.

^o By “ancient” some persons understand what belongs to the first *three* centuries of the Christian era; some, the first four; some, seven; so arbitrary and uncertain is the standard by which

gulations respecting Church-government, we can conclude, either with certainty, or with any degree of probability, to have been either introduced by the Apostles, or to have prevailed in their time, or in the time of their immediate successors, are to be considered as absolutely binding on all Christians for ever ;—as a model from which no Church is at liberty to depart. And they make our membership of the Church of Christ, and our hopes of the Gospel-salvation, depend on an exact adherence to every thing that is proved, or believed, or even suspected, to be an apostolical usage ; and on our possessing what they call Apostolical Succession ; that is, on our having a Ministry whose descent can be traced up in an unbroken and undoubted chain, to the Apostles themselves, through men regularly ordained by them or their successors, according to the exact forms originally appointed. And all Christians (so called) who do not come under this description, are to be regarded either as outcasts

some would persuade us to try questions, on which they, at the same time, teach us to believe our Christian Faith and Christian Hope are staked !

* “ Scire velim, pretium chartis quotus arroget annus :

* * * *

Est vetus atque probus, centum qui perficit annos.

Quid ? qui deperit minor uno mense vel anno,

Inter quos referendus erit ? veteresne ? ” * * *

Horace, Epist. I. b. 2.

from "the Household of Faith," or at best as in a condition "analogous to that of the Samaritans of old" who worshipped on Mount Gerizim,^p or as in "an intermediate state between Christianity and Heathenism," and as "left to the uncovenanted mercies of God."

§ 18. Those who on such grounds defend the Institutions and Ordinances, and vindicate the Apostolical Character, of our own (or indeed of any) Church,—whether on their own sincere conviction, or as believing that such arguments are the best calculated to inspire the mass of mankind with becoming reverence, and to repress the evil of schism,—do seem to me, in proportion as they proceed on those principles, to be, in the same degree, removing our institutions from a foundation on a rock, to place them on sand. Instead of a clearly-intelligible, well-established, and *accessible* proof of Divine Sanction for the claims of our Church, they would substitute one that is not only obscure, disputable, and out of the reach of the mass of mankind, but even self-contradictory, subversive of our own and every Church's claims, and leading to the very evils of doubt, and schismatical division, which it is desired to guard against.

Church-ordinances removed from a firm foundation, and rested on a basis of sand.

^p John iv.

True foundation of Church enactments.

The Rock on which I am persuaded our Reformers intended, and rightly intended, to rest the Ordinances of our Church, is, the warrant to be found in the Holy Scriptures written by, or under the direction of those to whom our Lord had entrusted the duty of "teaching men to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them." For in those Scriptures we find a Divine Sanction clearly given to a regular Christian Community,—a Church; which is, according to the definition in our 19th Article,¹ "a congregation (*i. e.* Society or Community; Ecclesia) of faithful men,^r in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things which of necessity are requisite to the same."

¹ In our Article as it stands in the *English*, it is "*The visible Church of Christ is,*" &c. ; but there can be no doubt, I think, that the more correct version from the Latin (the *Latin* Articles appear to have been the original, and the *English* a translation—in some few places, a careless translation—from the Latin) would have been "*A visible Church and a.*" The Latin "*Ecclesia Christi visibilis*" would indeed answer to either phrase, the want of an article definite or indefinite in that language rendering it liable to such ambiguity. But the context plainly shows that the writer is not speaking of the Universal Church, but of particular Churches, such as the "*Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome.*" The *English* translator probably either erred from momentary inattention, or (more likely) understood by "*Ecclesia,*" and by "*the Church,*" the particular Church whose Articles were before him,—the Church of England.

^r *I. e.* believers in Christ ;—fideles ;—πιστοί.

Now since, from the very nature of the case, every Society must have Officers, appointed in some way or other, and every Society that is to be *permanent*, a perpetual *succession* of Officers, in whatever manner kept up, and must have also a power of enacting, abrogating and enforcing on its own members, such regulations or bye-laws as are not opposed to some higher authority, it follows inevitably (as I have above observed) that any one who sanctions a Society, gives, in so doing, his sanction to those essentials of a Society ; its Government,—its Officers,—its Regulations. Accordingly, even if our Lord had *not* expressly said any thing about “binding and loosing,” still the very circumstance of his sanctioning a Christian Community would necessarily have implied his sanction of the Institutions, Ministers, and Government of a Christian Church, so long as nothing is introduced at variance with the positive enactments, and the fundamental principles, laid down by Himself and his Apostles.

§ 19. This, which I have called a foundation on a rock, is evidently that on which (as has been just observed) our Reformers designed to place our Church.

The English reformers chose the true foundation.

While they strongly deny to any Church the power to “ordain any thing contrary to God’s Word,” or to require as essential to salvation,

belief in any thing not resting on scriptural authority, they claim the power for each Church of ordaining and altering “rites and ceremonies,” “so that all things be done to edifying,” and nothing “contrary to God’s Word.” They claim on that ground for our own Church recognition of that power in respect of the Forms of Public Service ;—on the ground, that is (Art. 36) that these “contain nothing that is in itself superstitious and ungodly.”

Claim of
the Minis-
ters of the
Anglican
Church.

And they rest the claims of Ministers, not on some supposed sacramental virtue, transmitted from hand to hand in unbroken succession from the Apostles, in a chain, of which if any one link be even doubtful, a distressing uncertainty is thrown over all Christian Ordinances, Sacraments, and Church-privileges for ever ; but, on the fact of those Ministers being the *regularly-appointed officers of a regular Christian Community*. “It is not lawful” (says the 23d Article) “for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be *lawfully called and sent* to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord’s Vineyard.”^s

^s See § 23.

Those who are not satisfied with the foundation thus laid,—and which, as I have endeavoured to show, is the very foundation which Christ and his Apostles have prepared for us,—who seek to take higher ground, as the phrase is, and maintain what are called according to the modern fashion “Church-principles,” or “Church-of-England principles,” are in fact subverting the principles both of our own Church in particular, and of every Christian Church that claims the inherent rights belonging to a Community, and confirmed by the sanction of God’s Word as contained in the Holy Scriptures. It is advancing, but not in the right road,—it is advancing not in sound learning but error,—not in faith, but in superstitious credulity, to seek for some higher and better ground on which to rest our doctrines and institutions than that on which they were placed by “the Author and Finisher of our Faith.”^t

Pretended Church-principles subversive of the functions and rights of a Church.

^t It is curious to observe how very common it is for any Sect or Party to assume a title indicative of the very excellence in which they are especially deficient, or strongly condemnatory of the very errors with which they are especially chargeable. Thus, those who from time to time have designated themselves “Gnostics,” *i. e.* persons “*knowing*” the Gospel, in a far superior degree to other professed Christians,—have been generally remarkable for their *want* of knowledge of the very first rudiments of evangelical truth. The phrase “Catholic” religion, (*i. e.* “Universal”) is the most commonly in the mouths of those who are the most limited and *exclusive* in their views, and who seek to shut out the largest num-

On this point I will take the liberty of inserting an extract from a Charge (not published) which was delivered a year ago; because I wish to point out, that the views I am taking, whether sound or unsound—and this I sincerely wish to be decided according to the reasons adduced—are at least not hastily but deliberately adopted, and have undergone no change in that interval.

“When I speak of unceasing progress,—of continual improvement in all that pertains to the Christian life,—as what we ought to aim at, both in ourselves, and in those with whom we have influence, it may perhaps be proper to add,—that this does not imply any attempt ‘to be wise above that which is written,’—any expectation of a new and additional revelation, or of the discovery of new doctrines,—any pretensions to inspiration,—or hopes of a fresh out-pouring of that, or of any other miraculous gifts. It seemed needful to make this remark, because such hopes have been cherished,—such pre-

ber of Christian communities from the Gospel-covenant. “Schism,” again, is by none more loudly reprobated than by those who are not only the immediate authors of schism, but the advocates of principles tending to generate and perpetuate schisms without end. And “Church-principles,”—“High-church principles,”—“Church-of-England principles,”—are the favourite terms of those who go the furthest in subverting all these

Obvious as this fallacy is, there is none more commonly successful in throwing men off their guard.

tensions put forth,—from time to time, in various ages of the Church, and not least in the present.

“I have coupled together these two things,—miraculous gifts, and a new revelation, because I conceive them to be in reality inseparable. Miracles are the only sufficient credentials on which any one can reasonably demand assent to doctrines not clearly revealed (*to the understanding of his hearers*) in Scripture. The promulgation of new articles of faith, or of articles which, though not avowedly new, are yet not obviously contained in Scripture, is most presumptuous, unless so authenticated. And again, pretensions to miraculous powers such as those of Moses and the Prophets,—of Christ and the Apostles, seem to imply some such object to be furthered by them. At any rate, those who shall have thus established their claim to be considered as messengers from Heaven, *may* evidently demand assent to whatever they may, in that character, promulgate. If any persons therefore pretend to such a mark of a divine commission as the gift of tongues, or any such power, no one who admits their pretensions can consistently withhold assent from any thing they may declare themselves commissioned to teach.

“And, again, if any persons claim for any

traditions of the Church, an authority, either paramount to Scripture, or equal to Scripture, or concurrent with it,—or, which comes to the very same thing, *decisive as to the interpretation of Scripture*,—taking on themselves to decide what is ‘the Church,’ and *what* tradition is to be thus received,—these persons are plainly called on to establish by miraculous evidence the claims they advance. And if they make their appeal not to miracles wrought by themselves, but to those which originally formed the evidence of the Gospel, they are bound to show by some decisive proof, that that evidence can fairly be brought to bear upon and authenticate their pretension ;—that they are, by Christ’s decree, the rightful depositories of the power they claim.

“ But to such as reject and protest against all such groundless claims, an interminable field is still open for the application of all the faculties, intellectual and moral, with which God has endowed us, for the fuller understanding and development of the truths revealed in his written Word. To learn and to teach what is there to be found ;—to develop more and more fully to your own minds and to those of your hearers, what the Evangelists and Apostles have conveyed to us, will be enough and more than enough to occupy even a longer life than any of us can expect.

“The Mosaic Dispensation was the dawn of ‘the dayspring from on high,’ not yet arrived,—of a Sun only about to rise. It was a Revelation in itself imperfect. The Sun of the Gospel arose; ‘the true Light, which lighteth every one that cometh into the world’ appeared: but it was partially hidden, and is so, still, by a veil of clouds;—by prejudices of various kinds,—by the passions, and infirmities, and ignorance, of mankind. We may advance, and we may lead others to advance, indefinitely, in the full development of Gospel-truth,—of the real character and meaning and design of Christ’s religion; not by seeking to *superadd* something to the Gospel-revelation; but by a more correct and fuller comprehension of it;—not by increasing, absolutely, the light of the noonday-sun, but by clearing away the mists which obscure our view of it. Christianity itself cannot be improved; but men’s views, and estimate, and comprehension of Christianity, may be indefinitely improved.

“Vigilant discretion however is no less needful than zeal and perseverance, if we would really advance in the Christian course. The most active and patient traveller, if he be not also watchfully careful to keep in the right road, may, after having once diverged from it into some other track, be expending his energies in

going further and further astray, while he fancies himself making progress in his journey.

“ In various ways is the Christian, and not least, the Christian Minister, liable to this kind of self-deception. I am not now, you will observe, adverting chiefly to the danger of mistaking what is absolutely false, for true, or wrong for right ; but rather to that of mistaking the real character of some description of truth or of valuable knowledge. We have to guard against mistake, for instance, as to what is or is not a part of the *Christian-Revelation* ;—a truth *belonging* to the Gospel, and resting, properly, on divine authority. While advancing in the attainment of what may be in itself very valuable and important knowledge, we may be in fact going further and further in error, if we confound together the inspired and the uninspired,—the sacred text, with the human comment.

“ There are persons (such as I have above alluded to) who in their zeal—in itself laudable—to advance towards a full comprehension of the Gospel-revelation, have conceived that they are to seek for this by diligent research into the tenets and practices of what is called the Primitive Church ; *i. e.* the Christian world during the first three or first four Ages ; and some have even gone so far as to represent the revelation of the Christian-scheme contained in the New-

Testament as a mere imperfect and uncompleted outline, which was to be filled up by the Church in the succeeding three centuries ;—as a mere beginning of that which the early Fathers were empowered and commissioned to finish : though on what grounds any kind of authority is claimed for the Church *then*, which does not equally belong to it at this day, or at any intermediate period, no one, as far as I know, has even attempted to make out.

“ Now, to learn what has been said and done by eminent men in every Age of the Church, is of course interesting and valuable to a theological student. And a man of modesty and candour will not fail to pay great attention to their opinions, in whatever period they may have lived. He will also inquire with peculiar interest into the belief and the practices of those who had been instructed by the immediate disciples and other contemporaries of the Apostles themselves. But the mistake is, to assume, on the ground of presumptuous conjecture (for of proof, there is not even a shadow) that these men were infallible interpreters of the Apostles, and had received from them by tradition something not contained, or not plainly set forth, in their writings, but which yet were designed by those very Apostles as a necessary portion of Christianity.

“ Not only are all these assumptions utterly

groundless and unwarrantable, but, on the contrary, even if there is any thing which we can be morally certain *was* practised in the time of the Apostles, and with their sanction (as is the case for instance with the Agapæ or Lovefeasts) we must yet consider it as not designed by them to be of universal and perpetual obligation, where they have not distinctly laid it down as such in their writings. By omitting, in any case, thus to record certain of their practices or directions, they have given us as clear an indication as we could have looked for, of their design to leave these to the free choice and decision of each Church in each Age and Country. And there seems every reason to think that it was on purpose to avoid misapprehensions of this kind, that they did leave unrecorded so much of what we cannot but be sure they must have practised, and said, and established, in the Churches under their own immediate care.

“And it should be remembered that what some persons consider as the *safe* side in respect of such points,—as the extreme of scrupulous and cautious veneration—is in truth the reverse. A wise and right-minded reverence for divine authority will render us doubly scrupulous of reckoning any thing as a divine precept or institution, without sufficient warrant. Yet, at the first glance, a readiness to bestow religious veneration, with or without good grounds (which

is the very characteristic of superstition) is apt to be mistaken for a sign of pre-eminent piety. Besides those who hold the ‘double doctrine’—the ‘*disciplina arcani*’—and concerning whom therefore it would be rash to pronounce whether any particular tenet taught by them, is one which they inwardly believe, or is one of the exoteric instructions deemed expedient for the multitude,—besides these persons, there are, no doubt, men of sincere though mistaken piety, who, as has been just intimated, consider it as the safe side in all doubtful cases, to adhere with unhesitating confidence to every thing that *may possibly* have been introduced or practised by the Apostles;—to make every thing an article of Christian faith that could have been implied in any thing they may have taught. But such persons would perceive on more careful and sober reflection, that a rightly-scrupulous piety consists, as has been said, in drawing the line as distinctly as we are able, between what is, and what is not *designed* by our divine Instructors as a portion of their authoritative precepts and directions. It is by this careful anxiety to *comply with their intention with respect to us*, that we are to manifest a true veneration for them.

“Any thing that does not fall within this rule, we may believe, but not as a part of the *Christian revelation*;—we may practise, but not as a

portion of the *divine institutions essential to a Christian Church*, and binding on all men in all Ages : not, in short, as something placed beyond the bounds of that ‘binding and loosing’ power which belongs to *every Church*, in reference to things neither enjoined in Scripture nor at variance with it. Otherwise, even though what we believe should be, really, and in itself, true, and though what we practise, should chance to be in fact what the Apostles did practise, we should not be honouring, but dishonouring God, by taking upon ourselves to give the sanction of his authority to that from which He has thought fit to withhold that sanction. When the Apostle Paul gave his advice on matters respecting which he ‘had no commandment from the Lord,’ he of course thought that what he was recommending was good ; but so far was he from presuming to put it forth as a divine command, that he expressly notified the contrary. Let us not think to manifest our pious humility by reversing the Apostle’s procedure !

“I have thought it needful, in these times especially, to insert this caution against such mistaken efforts after advancement in Christian knowledge and practice ; against the delusions of those who, while they exult in their imagined progress in the Christian course, are, in reality, straying into other paths, and following a bewildering meteor.”

§ 20. Those whose "Church-principles" lead them thus to remove from a firm foundation the institutions of a Christian Church, and especially of our own, and to place them on the sand, are moreover compelled, as it were with their own hands, to dig away even that very foundation of sand. For, in respect of our own Church, since it inculcates repeatedly and earnestly as a fundamental principle,^u that nothing is to be insisted on as an essential point of faith, that is not taught in Scripture, any member of our Church who should *make* essentials of points confessedly *not* found in Scripture, and who should consequently make it a point of necessary faith to *believe* that these *are* essentials, must unavoidably be pronouncing condemnation, either on himself, or on the very Church he belongs to, and whose claims he is professing to fortify.

Pretended Church-principles fatal to the Christian hopes and privileges even of their advocates.

But moreover, not from our own Church only, but from the Universal Church,—from all the privileges and promises of the Gospel,—the principles I am condemning, go to exclude, if fairly followed out, the very persons who advocate them. For it is certain that our own institutions and practices (and the like may be said, I apprehend, of every other Church in the

^u Besides the Articles, see, on this point, the Ordination Service.

world) though not, we conceive, *at variance* with any Apostolical injunctions, or with any Gospel-principle, are, in several points, not precisely coincident with those of the earliest Churches. The Agapæ, for instance, or “Love-feasts,” alluded to just above, have, in most Churches, been long discontinued. The “Widows” again, whom we find mention of in Paul’s Epistles, appear plainly to have been an Order of Deaconesses regularly appointed to particular functions in the earliest Churches: and their Deacons appear to have had an office considerable different from those of our Church.

Each
Bishop
originally
presided
over one
entire
Church.

Again, it seems plainly to have been at least the general, if not the universal, practice of the Apostles, to appoint over each separate *Church* a *single* individual as a chief Governor under the title of “*Angel*” (i. e. *Messenger* or *Legate* from the Apostles) or “*BISHOP*,” i. e. *Superintendent* or *Overseer*. A CHURCH and a DIOCESE seem to have been for a considerable time *co-extensive* and *identical*. And each Church or Diocese (and consequently each Superintendent) though connected with the rest by ties of Faith and Hope and Charity, seems to have been (as has been already observed) perfectly independent as far as regards any power of control.

The plan pursued by the Apostles seems to have been, as has been above remarked, to es-

tablish a great number of small (in comparison with most modern Churches) distinct and independent Communities, each governed by its own single Bishop; consulting, no doubt, with his own Presbyters, and accustomed to act in concurrence with them, and occasionally conferring with the Brethren in other Churches, but owing no submission to the rulers of any other Church, or to any central common authority except the Apostles themselves. And other points of difference might be added.

Now to vindicate the institutions of our own, or of some other Church, on the Ground that they “are not in themselves superstitious or ungodly,”—that they are not at variance with Gospel-principles, or with any divine injunction that was designed to be of universal obligation, is intelligible and reasonable. But to vindicate them on the ground of the exact conformity, which it is notorious they do not possess, to the most ancient models, and even to go beyond this, and condemn all Christians whose institutions and ordinances are not “one and utterly like” our own, on the ground of their departure from the Apostolical precedents, which no Church has exactly adhered to,—does seem—to use no harsher expression,—not a little inconsistent and unreasonable. And yet one may not unfrequently hear members of Episcopalian Churches pronouncing severe condemnation on

those of other Communion, and even excluding them from the Christian Body, on the ground, not of their not being under the *best* form of Ecclesiastical Government,² but, of their wanting the very essentials of a Christian Church; viz. the very same distinct Orders in the Hierarchy that the Apostles appointed: and this, while the Episcopalians themselves have, universally, so far varied from the Apostolical institution as to have in one Church several *Bishops*; each of whom consequently differs in the office he holds, in a most important point, from one of the primitive Bishops as much as the Governor of any one of our Colonies does from a Sovereign Prince.

Now whether the several alterations, and departures from the original institutions, were or were not, in each instance, made on good grounds, in accordance with an altered state of society, is a question which cannot even be entertained by those who hold that no Church is competent to vary at all from the ancient model. Their principle would go to exclude at once from the pale of Christ's Church almost

² It is remarkable that there are *Presbyterians* also, who proceed on similar principles; who contend that originally the distinction between Bishops and Presbyters did not exist; and *consequently* (not that *Episcopacy* is not *essential* to a Church; but) that Episcopal government is an *unwarrantable innovation*,—a usurpation—a profane departure from the divine ordinances!

every Christian Body since the first two or three Centuries.

The edifice they overthrow crushes in its fall the blind champion who has broken its pillars.

§ 21. Waiving however what may be called a personal argument, and supposing that some mode could be devised of explaining away all the inconsistencies I have been adverting to, still, if the essentials of Christianity,—at least, a considerable portion of them—are not to be found in Scripture, but in a supplementary Tradition, which is to be sought in the works of those early Fathers who were orthodox, the foundations of a Christian's Faith and Hope become *inaccessible* to nearly the whole of the Laity, and to much the greater part of the Clergy.

Appeal to the practice of the early Churches, an argument inaccessible to the great mass of Christians.

This, it may be said, is just as it should be; and as it must be: the unlearned being necessarily dependent on the learned, in respect of several most important points; since the great mass of Christians cannot be supposed capable of even reading the Scriptures in the original tongues; much less of examining ancient manuscripts.

Now this necessity I see no reason for admitting, if it be understood in the sense that the unlearned must needs

Supposed dependence on the word of learned men.

take the word of the learned, and place implicit reliance^y on the good faith of certain individuals selected by them as their spiritual guides. It is in their power, and is surely their duty, to ascertain how far the assertions of certain learned men are to be safely relied on.^z

^y See Appendix, Note (H.)

^z "It is manifest that the concurrent testimony, positive or negative, of several witnesses, when there can have been no concert, and especially when there is any rivalry or hostility between them, carries with it a weight independent of that which may belong to each of them considered separately. For though, in such a case, each of the witnesses should be even considered as wholly undeserving of credit, still the chances might be incalculable against their all agreeing in the *same* falsehood. It is in this kind of testimony that the generality of mankind believe in the motions of the earth, and of the heavenly bodies, &c. Their belief is not the result of their own observations and calculations; nor yet again of their implicit reliance on the skill and the good-faith of any one or more astronomers; but it rests on the agreement of many independent and rival astronomers; who want neither the ability nor the will to detect and expose each other's errors. It is on similar grounds, as Dr. Hinds has justly observed, that all men, except about two or three in a million, believe in the existence and in the genuineness of manuscripts of ancient books, such as the Scriptures. It is not that they have themselves examined these; or again, (as some represent) that they rely implicitly on the good-faith of those who profess to have done so; but they rely on the *concurrent* and *uncontradicted* testimony of all who have made, or who *might make*, the examination; both unbelievers, and believers of various hostile sects; any one of whom would be sure to seize any opportunity to expose the forgeries or errors of his opponents.

This observation is the more important, because many persons are liable to be startled and dismayed on its being pointed out to them that they have been believing something—as they are led to suppose—on very insufficient reasons; when the truth is perhaps

But when, in the case now before us, men come to consider and inquire what the foundation really is on which they are told (according to the principles I have been speaking of) to rest their own hopes of eternal life, and to pronounce condemnation on those who differ from them, it cannot be but that doubt and dissatisfaction, and perhaps disgust and danger of ultimate infidelity will beset them, in proportion as they are of a serious and reflective turn, and really anxious to attain religious truth. For when referred to the works of the orthodox ancient Fathers, they find that a very large portion of these works are lost; or that some fragments or reports of them by other writers alone remain: they find again that what *has* come down to us is so vast in amount that a life is not sufficient for the attentive study of even the chief part of it; they find these Authors by no means agreed, on all points, with each other, or with themselves; and that learned men again are not agreed in the interpretation of *them*; and still less agreed as to the orthodoxy of each, and the degree of weight due to his judgment on several points; nor even agreed by some centuries as to the degree of *antiquity*^a that is to make

Doubtful-
ness of ap-
peals to
early
Churches.

that they have been mis-stating their reasons."—*Rhetoric*, part I. ch. 2. § 4.

^a See Note, p. 110.

the authority of each decisive, or more or less approaching to decisive.

Uncertain
foundation
of faith
based on
reports.

Every thing in short pertaining to this appeal is obscure,—uncertain,—disputable—and actually disputed,—to such a degree, that even those who are not able to read the original authors may yet be perfectly competent to perceive how unstable a foundation they furnish. They can perceive that the mass of Christians are called on to believe and to do what is essential to Christianity, in implicit reliance on the *reports* of their respective pastors, as to what certain deep theological antiquarians have *reported* to them, respecting the *reports* given by certain ancient Fathers, of the *reports* current in their times, concerning apostolical usages and institutions! And yet whoever departs in any degree from these is to be regarded at best in an intermediate state between Christianity and Heathenism! Surely the tendency of this procedure must be to drive the doubting into confirmed (though perhaps secret) infidelity, and to fill with doubts the most sincerely pious, if they are anxiously desirous of attaining truth, and unhappily have sought it from such instructors.

Pretended
decisions
of the Ca-
tholic
Church.

§ 22. But an attempt is usually made to silence all such doubts by a reference to the Catholic Church, or

the “primitive” or the “ancient Catholic Church,” as having authority to decide,—and as having in fact decided,—on the degree of regard due to the opinions and testimony of individual writers among the Fathers. And a mere reference such as this, accompanied with unhesitating assertion, is not unfrequently found to satisfy or silence those who might be disposed to doubt. And while questions are eagerly discussed as to the degree of deference due to the “decisions of the universal Church,” some preliminary questions are often overlooked: such as,—when, and where did any one visible Community, comprising all Christians as its members, exist? Does it exist still? Is its authority the same as formerly? Where is its central supreme government, such as every single Community must have? Who is the accredited organ empowered to pronounce its decrees, in the name of the whole Community? And where are these decrees registered?

Yet many persons are accustomed to talk familiarly of the decisions of the Catholic Church, as if there were some accessible record of them, such as we have of the Acts of any Legislative Body; and “as if there existed some recognised functionaries, regularly authorized to govern and to represent that community, the Church of Christ; and answering to the king—senate—or other constituted au-

No accessible records of Catholic decisions.

thorities, in any secular community. And yet no shadow of proof can be offered, that the Church, in the above sense,—the Universal Church,—can possibly give any decision at all;—that it has any constituted authorities as the organs by which such decision could be framed or promulgated;—or, in short, that there is, or ever was, any *one community on earth*, recognised, or having any claim to be recognised, as the Universal Church, bearing rule over and comprehending all particular Churches.

“ ‘ We are wont to speak of the foundation of the Church,—the authority of the Church,—the various characteristics of the Church,—and the like,—as if the Church were, originally at least, One Society in all respects. From the period in which the Gospel was planted beyond the precincts of Judæa, this manifestly ceased to be the case; and as Christian societies were formed among people more and more unconnected and dissimilar in character and circumstances, the difficulty of considering the Church as One Society increases. Still, from the habitual and unreflecting use of this phrase, “the Church,” it is no uncommon case to confound the two notions; and occasionally to speak of the various societies of Christians as *one*, occasionally, as *distinct* bodies. The mischief which has been grafted on this inadvertency in the use of the term, has already been

noticed ; and it is no singular instance of the enormous practical results which may be traced to mere ambiguity of expression. The Church is undoubtedly *one*, and so is the Human Race *one* ; but not as a *Society*. It was from the first composed of distinct societies ; which were called one, because formed on common principles. It is One Society, only when considered as to its *future* existence. The circumstance of its having one common Head, (Christ,) one Spirit, one Father, are points of unity which no more make the Church One Society on earth, than the circumstance of all men having the same Creator, and being derived from the same Adam, renders the Human Race one Family. That Scripture often speaks of Christians generally under the term, “the Church,” is true ; but if we wish fully to understand the force of the term so applied, we need only call to mind the frequent analogous use of ordinary historical language when no such doubt occurs. Take, for example, Thucydides’s *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It contains an account of the transactions of two opposed parties, each made up of many distinct communities ; on the one side were Democracies, on the other Oligarchies. Yet precisely the same use is made by the historian of the terms “the Democracy” and “the Oligarchy,” as we find Scripture adopting with regard to the term “the Church.” No one is mis-

led by these, so as to suppose the Community of Athens *one* with that of Corcyra, or the Theban with the Lacedæmonian. When the heathen writer speaks of “the Democracy of” or “in” the various democratical States, we naturally understand him to mean distinct Societies *formed on similar principles*; and so, doubtless, ought we to interpret the sacred writers when they, in like manner, make mention of the Church of, or in, Antioch, Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, &c.

“‘But there was also an especial reason why the term Church should have been often used by the sacred writers as if it applied to One Society. God’s dispensation had hitherto been limited to a single society,—the Jewish People. Until the Gospel was preached, the Church of God *was* One Society. It therefore sometimes occurs with the force of a transfer from the objects of God’s *former* dispensation, to those of his *present* dispensation. In like manner, as Christians are called “the Elect,” their bodies “the Temple,” and their Mediator “the High Priest;” so, their condition, as the objects of God’s new dispensation, is designated by the term “the Church of Christ,” and “the Church.”

“‘The Church is *one*, then, not as consisting of One Society, but because the various societies, or Churches, were then modelled, and ought still to be so, on the same principles; and

because they enjoy common privileges,—one Lord, one Spirit, one baptism. Accordingly, the Holy Ghost, through his agents the Apostles, has not left any detailed account of the formation of any Christian society ; but He has very distinctly marked the great principles on which all were to be founded, whatever distinctions may exist amongst them. In short, the foundation of the Church by the Apostles was not analogous to the work of Romulus, or Solon ; it was not properly, the foundation of Christian societies which occupied them, but the establishment of the principles on which Christians in all ages might form societies for themselves.’ —*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*. “ Age of Apostolical Fathers,” p. 774.

“ The above account is sufficiently established even by the mere negative circumstance of the absence of all mention in the Sacred Writings of any *one* Society on earth, having a Government and officers of its own, and recognised as the Catholic or Universal Church : especially when it is considered that the frequent mention of the particular Churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, Corinth, &c.—of the seven Churches in Asia,—and of ‘ the care of all the Churches ’ which Paul had founded, would have rendered unavoidable the notice of the One Church (had there been any such) which bore rule over all the rest, either as its subjects, or as provincial departments of it.

“ This negative evidence, I say, would alone be fully sufficient, considering that the whole burden of proof lies on the side of those who set up such a claim. He who appeals to the alleged decisions of a certain Community, is clearly bound, in the first place, to prove its existence. But if we proceed to historical evidence, we find on examination, that there *never was a time* when the supremacy of any one Church was acknowledged by all, or nearly all Christians. And to say they ought to have done so, and that as many as have refused such submission are to be regarded as schismatics and rebels, is evidently to prejudge the question.

“ The Universal Church, then, being *one*, in reference, not to any one Government on earth, but only to our Divine Head, even Christ, ruling Christians by his Spirit, which spoke to them from time to time through the Apostles while these were living, and speaks still in the words of the Christian Scriptures, it follows that each Christian is bound (as far as Church-authority extends) to submit to the ordinances and decisions,—not repugnant to Scripture, (See Art. xxxiv.) of the particular Church of which he is a member.

• “ If it were possible that all the Christians now in existence—suppose 250 millions—could assemble, either in person, or by deputations of

their respective Clergy, in one place, to confer together ; and that the votes, whether personal or by proxy, of 230 or 240 millions of these were to be at variance (as in many points they probably would be) with the decisions and practices of our own Church ; we should be no more bound to acquiesce in and adopt the decision of that majority, even in matters which we do not regard as essential to the Christian Faith, than we should be, to pass a law *for this realm*, because it was approved by the majority of the *human race*.”^b

And yet one may find it asserted, as a matter that admits of no doubt, and is to be taken for granted, as “generally admitted, except by those trained in a modern school, that any particular Church *owes obedience* to the Universal Church, of which it is a part.” Such assertions coming from men of acknowledged learning (in reality far too learned not to be themselves well aware that there never *was*, since the days of the Apostles, any such Body *existing*, as *could* claim such obedience from each particular Church) will often succeed in overawing the timid, in deceiving the ignorant and inconsiderate, and in satisfying the indolent.

Bold assumptions of authority for supposed Catholic decisions.

^b Essays, 4th Series, pp. 166—171.

Awe in-
spired by
appeals to
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fined au-
thority.

The temptation, doubtless, is very strong—especially for those who would maintain doctrines or practices, that are, seemingly at least, at variance with Scripture—to make an appeal to a standard that is inaccessible to the mass of mankind, and that is in all respects so vague; to a vast and *indefinite* number of writers, extending over a very long and *indefinite* space of time;—and to avail oneself of the awe-inspiring force of sacred names by exhorting men in the apparent language of Scripture^c—(for no such passage really exists) to “hear the Church!”

Appeals to
supposed
decisions,
&c. of the
Catholic
Church, as
superfluous
as they are
unsound.

§ 23. The readiness with which some persons acquiesce, at least profess to acquiesce, in supposed decisions of the Universal or Catholic Church, using the term in a sense in which it can even be proved that no such Community ever existed on Earth, and of General Councils such as, in fact, never met, and of

^c Our Lord directs his disciples, in the event of a dispute between two individuals, to refer the matter, in the last resort, to the decision of the Congregation, Assembly, or Church (Ecclesia); and that if any one *disobey* (or “refuse to hear,” as our translators render it) this, he is to be regarded “as a heathen,” &c., ἐν τῇς ἐκκλησίας παρακοή. Those who adduce this passage, would, it may be presumed, have at least *preferred* bringing forward, if they could have found one, some passage of Scripture which does support their views.

Traditions several of which are such as to need proof, first, how far they are genuine, and next, how far, if admitted to be genuine, they would be binding on all Christians,—this ready acquiescence, I say, is the more extraordinary when we consider that many of the points which are attempted to be supported by an appeal to such authority, do, in fact, stand in no need of that support, but have a firm foundation in Scripture, by virtue of the powers plainly conferred by Christ Himself on Christian Communities.

Any forms, for instance, for Public Worship, and for the Ordaining of Christian Ministers, which “contain” (as our Reformers maintain respecting those they sanctioned)^d “nothing that is in itself superstitious and contrary to God’s Word,” are plainly binding, by Christ’s own sanction, on the members of the Church that appoints them.

But some, it should be seen, are not satisfied with a *justification* of their own ordinances and institutions, unless they can find a plea for condemning all those who differ from them. And this plea they seek, not by endeavouring to show the superior expediency with a view to decency, good order, and edification, of the enactments they would defend, but by maintaining the obligatory character of supposed apostolical

Not only self-vindication sought, but also condemnation of others.

^d Article xxxvi.

traditions ; and then they are driven, as I have said, to shift our own Institutions from the foundation on a rock, to place them on sand.

When one sees persons not content with the advantages they enjoy, unless they can exclude others, and in the attempt to do so, “falling into the midst of the pit they have digged for another,” it is hardly possible to avoid recalling to one’s mind the case of Haman and the result of his jealousy of Mordecai.

Reformers represented as appealing to Scripture and Tradition jointly. Some persons have endeavoured from time to time, to represent our Reformers as appealing to the practice of what is called the Primitive Church, and to the writings of the early Fathers, as the principal,—or as one principal—ground on which they rest the vindication of their own decisions ; and as taking for their authoritative standard of rectitude and truth in religious matters, not Scripture alone, but Scripture combined and “blended with Tradition.”

Conduct of the Reformers in respect of their controversy with Romanists. And it is very true that they do, as it was perfectly natural they should, engaged as they were in controversy with the Romanists, frequently refer to the records which their opponents appealed to, in order to show that the very authorities these last were accustomed to rely on, are in fact opposed to them. They point out the proofs extant that many doctrines and practices

which *had been made to rest on supposed ancient tradition* were in fact comparatively modern innovations; and they vindicate themselves from the charge of *innovation* in some points by referring to ancient precedents. All this is perfectly natural and perfectly justifiable. But it is quite a different thing from acknowledging a decisive authority in early precedents, and in Tradition, either alone, or “blended with Scripture.”^e If any man is charged with introducing an *unscriptural novelty*, and he shows first that it is *scriptural*, and then (by reference to the opinions of those who lived long ago) that it is *no novelty*, it is most unreasonable to infer that Scripture authority would have no weight with him unless backed by the opinions of fallible men.

No one would reason thus absurdly in any other case. For instance, when some Bill is brought into one of the Houses of Parliament,

^e The maxim of “*abundans cautela nocet nemini*” is by no means a safe one if applied without limitation. (See Logic, b. ii. ch. 5, § 6.)

It is sometimes imprudent (and some of our Divines have, I think, committed this imprudence) to attempt to “make assurance doubly sure” by bringing forward confirmatory reasons, which, though in themselves perfectly fair, may be interpreted unfairly, by representing them as an acknowledged indispensable foundation;—by assuming, for instance, that an appeal to such and such of the ancient Fathers or Councils, in confirmation of some doctrine or practice, is to be understood as an admission that it would fall to the ground if *not* so confirmed.

and it is represented by its opponents as of a *novel* and unheard of character, it is common, and natural, and allowable, for its advocates to cite instances of similar Acts formerly passed. Now, how absurd it would be thought for any one thence to infer that those who use such arguments must mean to imply that Parliament has no power to pass an Act unless it can be shown that similar Acts have been passed formerly!

If any Bishop of the present day should be convinced that such and such Theologians,—ancient or modern—have given correct and useful expositions of certain parts of Scripture, he could not but wish that the Clergy he ordained should give similar expositions; and he would probably recommend to their attentive perusal the works of those theologians. Now how monstrous it would be to represent him, on such grounds, as making those works a *standard of faith conjointly* with Scripture!

Reference
to the writ-
tings or
procedure
of any per-
sons, no
proof that
their autho-
rity is put
forth as de-
cisive.

Of a like character is the very reference I have now been making to the documents put forth by those reformers themselves. I certainly believe them to be in accordance with the principles above laid down as scriptural and reasonable: but I protest (and so probably would they) against “blending with Scripture” the writings of the Reformers, to constitute

jointly a rule of faith binding on every Christian's conscience. If any one is convinced that the doctrines and practices and institutions of our Church are unscriptural, he is bound in conscience to leave it.

Our Reformers believed, no doubt, that their institutions were, on the whole, similar to those of the earliest Churches; perhaps they may have believed this similarity to be greater than it really is: but what is the *ground* on which they rested the claim of these institutions to respectful acquiescence? On the ground of their "not being in themselves superstitious, and ungodly, and *contrary* to *God's Word*;—on the ground of the "power of each particular Church to ordain and abrogate or alter" (though not wantonly and inconsiderately) Church-rites and ceremonies, provided nothing be done contrary to Scripture." So also they believed, no doubt, that the doctrines they taught, and which they commissioned others to teach, were such as had been taught by many early Fathers; and thinking this, they could not but wish that the teaching of the Clergy should coincide with that of those Fathers: but what was the *rule* laid down, —the standard fixed on, for ascertaining what should be taught as a part of the Christian Religion? It was Holy Scripture: not Scripture and Tradition, jointly, and "blended together;" but

Belief of the reformers as to the fact of ancient practice, no proof of their admitting that as an infallible guide.

the Written Word of God ; nothing being allowed to be taught as an Article of faith that could not thence be proved. Again, they doubtless believed that there were early precedents for the form of Church-government they maintained,—for the different orders of the Ministry, and for the mode of appointing each. They believed, no doubt, as a fact, that the Apostles ordained Ministers, and these, others, and so on in succession, down to the then-existing period. But what was the basis on which they deliberately chose to rest their system ? On the declared principle that “those and those only are to be accounted as lawfully-appointed Ministers who are called and sent out by *those who have authority* in the Congregation” (or Church) “to call and send labourers into the Lord’s vineyard :” and though themselves deliberately adhering to episcopal Ordination, they refrain, both in the Article on the “Church” and in that on “ministering in the Church” from specifying Episcopacy and episcopal Ordination as among the essentials.

The Articles the Symbol embodying the deliberate decisions of our Church.

§ 24. Some *individuals* among the Reformers have in some places used language which may be understood as implying a more strict obligation to conform to ancient precedents than is acknowledged in the Articles. But the Articles being

deliberately and *jointly* drawn up for the very purpose of precisely determining what it was designed should be determined respecting the points they treat of, and in order to supply to the Anglican Church their Confession of Faith on those points, it seems impossible that any man of ingenuous mind can appeal from the Articles, Liturgy, and Rubric, put forth as the authoritative declarations of the Church, to any other writings, whether by the same or by other authors.^f On the contrary, the very cir-

^f Articles XIX. XX. XXIII. XXXIV. XXXVI.

“XIX. *Of the Church.*—The visible Church of Christ [“*ecclesia Christi visibilis est,*” &c. evidently *A* visible Church of Christ is *a* congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

“As the Church of *Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch*, have erred; so also the Church of *Rome* hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

“XX. *Of the Authority of the Church.*—The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

“XXIII. *Of Ministering in the Congregation.*—It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this

cumstance that opinions going far beyond what the Articles express, or in other respects considerably differing from them, did exist, and were *well known and current*, in the days of our reformers, gives even the *more* force to their *deliberate omissions* of these, and their distinct declaration of what they do mean to maintain. It was not hastily and unadvisedly that they

work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

"XXXIV. *Of the Traditions of the Church.*—It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one and utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like,) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren.

"Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.

"XXXVI. *Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers.*—The Book of Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops, and Ordering of Priests and Deacons, lately set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth, and confirmed at the same time by authority of Parliament, doth contain all things necessary to such Consecration and Ordering: neither hath it any thing, that of itself is superstitious and ungodly. And therefore whosoever are consecrated or ordered according to the Rites of that Book, since the second year of the forenamed King Edward unto this time, or hereafter shall be consecrated or ordered according to the same Rites; we decree all such to be rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordered."

based the doctrines of their Church on "the pure Word of God," and the claim of their Church to the character of a Christian Community, on its being a "Congregation of believers, in which that pure Word is preached, and the Christian Sacraments duly administered."

Whatever therefore may have been the private opinion of any individuals among their number, they have declared plainly what it was they *agreed* in regarding as a safe and sufficient foundation, and as essential, and consequently requiring to be set forth and embodied in the Symbol or Creed of their Church.

Distinction between what was believed by any of the Reformers, and what was *agreed on* as essential.

But neither the Reformers of our Church, nor any other human Being, could frame any expressions such as not to admit of being explained away, or the consequences of them somehow evaded, by an ingenious person who should resolutely set himself to the task. And accordingly our Church has been represented as resting her doctrines and her claims on Scripture and Tradition *jointly*, and "blended" together.

We have been told for instance of a person held up as a model of *pure Anglican Church-principles*, that he "submitted to the decisions of inspiration *wherever* it was to be found, whether in Scripture or Antiquity." And

again we have been told that “Rome differs from us as to the *authority* which she ascribes to tradition: she regards it as *co-ordinate*, our divines as *sub-ordinate*; as to *the way in which it is to be employed*, she, as *independent* of Holy Scripture; ours, as *subservient* to, and blended with it: as to *its limits*, she supposes that the Church of Rome has the power of imposing new articles necessary to be believed for salvation; ours, that all such articles were comprised at first in the Creed, and that the Church has only the power of clearing, defining, and expounding these fixed articles.”

The Anglican Church does not blend Tradition with Scripture.

Now if by “us” and “our divines” is to be understood certain individuals who profess adherence to the Church of England, the above description is, no doubt, very correct as far as relates to THEM: but if it be meant that such are the tenets of our Church itself as set forth in its authoritative Confession of faith,—the Articles, nothing can be more utterly unfounded, and indeed more opposite to the truth. Our Church not only does *not* “blend Scripture with ‘Tradition,’” but takes the most scrupulous care to distinguish from every thing else the Holy Scriptures, as the sufficient and sole authoritative standard.

Our Reformers do not merely *omit* to ascribe to any Creed or other statement of any doctrine, an *intrinsic* authority or one derived from tradi-

tion, but in the Article on the three Creeds,^g *they take care distinctly to assign the ground on which those are to be retained*; viz. that “they may be proved by Holy Writ.”

Grounds on which the creeds are made to rest.

§ 25. As for the distinction drawn between making Tradition on the one hand “an authority *co-ordinate with* Scripture,” on the other hand, “*subordinate and blended with* Scripture,” I cannot but think it worse than nugatory.^h The latter doctrine I have no scruple in pronouncing the worse of the two; because while it virtually

Pretended distinction between co-ordinate and subordinate tradition.

^g Nor by the way is it true that our Church has declared, in that, or in any other Article, “that all such Articles as are necessary to be believed for Salvation were comprised at first in the [Apostles’] Creed. This, in fact, is neither done, nor was intended to be done, by the framers of that Creed; if at least they held—as I doubt not they did, *the doctrine of the Atonement*: for *this is not at all mentioned* in the Apostles’ Creed. The cause, I have no doubt, was that the doctrine had not in the earliest ages, been *disputed*. But at any rate, the fact is certain; that the Creed does dwell on the reality of the historical transaction only, the actual *death* of Christ, without asserting *for whom* or *for what* He suffered death.

^h It is not meant to be implied that all persons who take this view are, themselves, disposed to join the Romish Church, or to think little of the differences between that and their own. Distinctions may be felt as important by *one* person, *which* may appear to *others*, and may be in themselves, utterly insignificant. The members of the Greek Church for instance, abhor *image-worship*, while they pay to *pictures* an adoration which Protestants would regard as equally superstitious.

comes to the same thing, it is more insidious, and less likely to alarm a mind full of devout reverence for Scripture.

Tradition
blended
with Scrip-
ture, the
most dan-
gerous.

When men are told of points of faith which they are to receive on the authority of Tradition alone, quite independently of any Scripture-warrant, they are not unlikely to shrink from this with a doubt or a disgust, which they are often relieved from at once by a renunciation, in words, of such a claim, and by being assured that Scripture is the supreme Authority, and that Tradition is to be received as its hand-maid only,—as not independent of it, but “subordinate and blended with it.” And yet if any or every part of Scripture is to be interpreted according to a supposed authoritative Tradition, and from that interpretation there is to be *no appeal*, it is plain that, to all practical purposes, this comes to the same thing as an independent Tradition. For on this system, any thing may be made out of any thing. The Jews may resort whenever it suits their purpose, (and often do) to an appeal to their Scriptures INTERPRETED *according to their tradition*, in behalf of any thing they are disposed to maintain. I remember conversing some years ago with an educated Jew on the subject of some of their observances, and remarking, in the course of the conversation, that their prohibition of eating butter and flesh at the

same meal, rested, I supposed, not, like several other prohibitions, on the Mosaic written Laws, but on Tradition alone. No, he assured me it was prohibited in the Law. I dare say my readers would be as much at a loss as I was, to guess where. He referred me to Exod. xxiii. 19.

In like manner, if an ordinary student of Scripture declares that he finds no warrant there for believing in the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and that he finds on the contrary our Lord Himself declaring that "it is the *Spirit* that quickeneth;" (giveth life) "*the flesh profiteth nothing*," he is told that Tradition directs us to interpret literally the words "This is my Body," and that he must not presume to set up his "private judgment" against the interpretation, and this, when perhaps he is assured by the same person, on similar grounds, that "the whole Bible is one great Parable."

Consequences of authoritative interpretations of Scripture by Tradition.

If again he finds the Apostles ordaining Elders, (Presbyters) and never alluding to any person, except Christ himself, as bearing any such office in the Christian Church as that of the Levitical Priest, (Hiereus) he is told, on the authority of Tradition, which he must not dispute, that Presbyter means Hiereus, a sacrificing Priest. Mahomet's application to himself of the prophecy of Jesus that He would "send

another Paraclete" or Comforter, was received by his followers on similar grounds; that is, it was an interpretation which he chose to put on the words; and woe to him who should dispute it!

If again we find the whole tenor of Scripture opposed to Invocation of Saints, and Image-worship, we may be told that there is a kind of invocation of Saints which the Scriptures, as interpreted by Tradition, allow and encourage. And so on, to an indefinite extent; just as effectually, and almost as easily, as if Tradition had been set up independent of Scripture, instead of being "blended with it."ⁱ

"Tradition" and "Church-interpretation" are made, according to this system, subordinate to, and dependent on Scripture, much in the same way that some parasite-plants are dependent on the trees that support them. The parasite at first clings to, and rests on the tree, which it gradually overspreads with its own foliage, till by little and little, it weakens and completely smothers it:

"Miraturque novas frondes, et non sua poma."

Insidious
character
of a wrong
principle
not at first
followed
out into all
its results.

And it may be added that the insidious character of this system is still further increased, if the principle be laid down without following it out, at once,

ⁱ See Powell on Tradition, § 14—17.

into all the most revolting consequences that may follow, and that have followed from its adoption. For by this means a contrast is drawn between the most extravagant, and a far more moderate, system of falsehood and superstition ; and it is insinuated that this favorable contrast is the result of the one being built on “co-ordinate” and the other on “subordinate” Tradition ; the real difference being only that every usurped and arbitrary power is usually *exercised with comparative leniency at first*, till it has been well established. Let but the *principle* which is common to both systems be established ; and the one may be easily made to answer all the purposes of the other.

And all this time the advocates of this authoritative tradition may loudly proclaim that they require no assent to any thing but what “may be proved by Scripture ;” that is, proved *to them* ; and which, on the ground of *their* conviction, must be implicitly received by every man. It is most important,—when the expression is used of “referring to Scripture as the infallible standard,” and requiring assent to such points of faith only, as can be thence proved, to settle clearly, in the outset, the important question “proved *to whom* ?” If any man or Body of men refer us to Scripture, as the sole authoritative standard, meaning that we are not to be called on to believe any thing as a neces-

Proved to whom ? an important question.

sary point of faith, on their word, but only on *our own* conviction that it is scriptural, then, they place our faith on the basis, not of human authority, but of divine. But if they call on *us*, as a point of conscience to receive whatever is proved to *their* satisfaction from Scripture, even though it may appear to *us* unscriptural, then, instead of releasing us from the usurped authority of Man taking the place of God, they are placing on us two burdens instead of one. "You require us," we might reply, "to believe, first, that whatever you teach is *true* ; and secondly, besides this, to believe also, that it is a truth *contained in Scripture* ; and we are to *take your word* for both !"

§ 26. I can imagine persons urging, Alleged importance of human teaching. in reply to what has been said, the importance of giving the people religious instruction over and above the mere reading of Scripture,—the utility of explanations, and comments,—and the necessity of creeds and catechisms, &c. ; and dwelling also on the reverence due to antiquity, and on the arrogance of disregarding the judgment of pious and learned men, especially of such as lived in or near the times of the Apostles.

It is almost superfluous to remark that nothing at variance with all this has been here advanced. The testimony of ancient writers as to the facts,

that such and such doctrines or practices did or did not prevail in their own times, or that such and such a sense was, in their times, conveyed by certain passages of Scripture, may often be very valuable ; provided we keep clear of the mistake of inferring, either that whatever is ancient is to be supposed apostolical, or even necessarily, *in accordance* with apostolical teaching ; (as if errors had not crept in, even during the lifetime^k of the Apostles) or again, that every practice and regulation that really had the sanction of the Apostles, (and which, therefore, must be concluded to have been the best, *at that time*) was designed by them,—when they abstained [see § 16] from recording it in writing,—to be of universal and eternal obligation ;—in short, that they entrusted to *oral Tradition* any of the *essentials* of Christianity.¹ And, again, the opinions of any author, ancient or modern, are entitled to respectful consideration in proportion as he may have been a sensible, pious, and learned man : provided we draw the line distinctly between the works of divine

^k See Appendix, Note (I.)

¹ And yet one may find persons defending this view by alleging that we have the Scriptures themselves by Tradition. Any one may be believed to be serious in urging such an argument, if it is found that he places as much confidence in the genuineness of some account that has been transmitted from *mouth to mouth by popular rumors* from one end of the kingdom to another, as in a *letter* that has been transmitted over the same space.

messengers inspired from above, and those of fallible men.

The utility, and indeed necessity, of human instruction, both for young Christians and adults, has never, that I know of, been denied by any Christian Church or denomination. The only important distinction is between those who do, and those who do not, permit, and invite, and encourage, their hearers to "search the Scriptures whether these things be so," which they are taught by their pastors.^m

The distinction, as I have above remarked, is apparent only, and not really important, between those who require the acceptance of what they teach, independently of Scripture, and those who do refer to Scripture as the ground

^m It may be not unnecessary here to remark that I mean a reference to Scripture as the *sole basis* of the articles of necessary faith,—the only *decisive authority*.

Some persons, while claiming reception for such and such confessions of faith, declare continually and with much earnestness, that they are teaching nothing but what is "*conformable* to Scripture," "*agreeable* to Scripture," &c. And the unwary are often misled by not attending to the important distinction between this,—between what is, simply *agreeable* to Scripture,—and what is *derived from* Scripture,—*founded* on it, and claiming no other authority.

When it is said that the Old Testament and the New are *not at variance*, but *conformable* to each other, this is quite different from saying that either of them *derives all its authority* from the other. On the other hand, our Reformers do not maintain merely that the Creeds which they receive are *agreeable to Scripture*; but that they are to be received *because* they may be proved from Scripture.

of their *own* conviction, or at least as confirmatory of their teaching, but require *their* interpretations of Scripture to be implicitly received; denying to individuals the right and the dutyⁿ of judging ultimately for themselves. The real distinction is between those who do, and those who do not, recognise this right and duty. For if a certain comment is to be received implicitly and without appeal, it not only is placed, practically, as far as relates to every thing except a mere question of *dignity*, on a level with Scripture,^o but has also a strong—and as experience has abundantly proved,—an increasing tendency to supersede it. A regular and compact *system* of theology, professedly compiled from Scripture, or from “Scripture and Tradition blended together,”^p if it be that which, after all, we must acquiesce in as infallible, whether it accord or not with what appears to

ⁿ See Dr. Hawkins on the Duty of Private Judgment.

^o Among the Parliamentarians at the time of the Civil War, there were many,—at first a great majority,—who professed to obey the King’s commands, as *notified to them by Parliament*, and levied forces in the King’s name against his person. If any one admitted Parliament to be the sole and authoritative interpreter and expounder of the regal commands, and this, without any check from any other power, it is plain that he virtually admitted the sovereignty of that Parliament, just as much as if he had recognised their formal deposition of the King. The parallelism of this case with the one before us, is too obvious to need being dwelt on.

^p See Essay (Third Series) on “Undue Reliance on Human Authority.”

us to be the sense of Scripture, being more compendious and methodical than the Sacred Books themselves, will naturally be preferred by the learner. And all study, properly so called, of the rest of Scripture,—(for on the above supposition, such a comment would be itself a part of Scripture, infallible and divinely inspired, as much as the rest)—all lively interest in the perusal,—would be nearly superseded by such an inspired compendium of doctrine; to which alone, as being far the most convenient for that purpose, habitual reference would be made in any question that might arise. Both would be regarded, indeed, as of divine authority: but the compendium, as the fused and purified metal; the other, as the *mine*, containing the crude ore.

Use and
abuse of
human in-
struction.

§ 27. The uses are so important, and the abuses so dangerous, of the instruction which may be afforded by uninspired Christian teachers, that it may be worth while still further to illustrate the subject by an analogy, homely perhaps and undignified, but which appears to me perfectly apposite, and fitted by its very familiarity to answer the better its purpose of affording explanation.

The utility of what is called paper-currency is universally acknowledged and perceived. Without possessing any intrinsic value, it is a

convenient representative of coins and ingots of the precious metals. And it possesses this character, from its being known or confidently believed, that those who issue it are ready, on demand, to exchange it for those precious metals. And the occurrence, from time to time, of this demand, and the constant liability to it, are the great *check* to an over-issue of the paper-money. But if paper-money be made a legal tender, and not convertible into gold and silver at the pleasure of the holder,—if persons are required to receive it in payment, by an arbitrary decree of the Government, either that paper *shall* be considered as having an intrinsic value, or again, that it shall be considered as representing bullion, or land,^a or some other intrinsically valuable commodity, the existence and amount of which, and the ability of Government to produce it, are to be believed, not by the test of any one's demanding and obtaining payment, but *on the word of the very Government* that issues this inconvertible paper-currency, then, the consequences which ensue are well known. The precious metals gradually disappear, and a profusion of worthless paper alone remains.

Even so it is with human teaching in religion. It is highly useful, as long

Scripture
proof to be
produced
on demand.

^a This was the case with the Assignats and Mandats of France.

as the instructors refer the People to Scripture, exhorting and assisting them to “prove all things and hold fast that which is right;”—as long as the Church “ordains nothing contrary to God’s word,”—nothing, in short, beyond what a christian Community is authorized both by the essential character of a Community, and by Christ’s sanction, to enact; and requires nothing to be believed as a point of christian faith “that may not be declared”^r (*i. e.* satisfactorily proved) to be taken from Holy Scripture. But when a Church, or any of its Pastors, ceases to make this payment on demand—if I may so speak—of Scripture-proof,^s and requires implicit faith, on human authority, in human dogmas or interpretations, all *check* is removed to the introduction of any conceivable amount of falsehood and superstition; till human inventions may have overlaid and disfigured Gospel-truth, and Man’s usurped authority have gradually superseded divine: even as was the case with the rabbinical Jews, who continued to profess the most devout reverence for the Mosaic Law, even at the time when we are told that “in vain they worshipped God,

^r The word “declared” is likely to mislead the English reader, from its being ordinarily used in the present day in a different sense. The Latin “*declarare*,” of which it was evidently intended to be a translation, signifies “to make clear”—“to set forth plainly.”

^s See Appendix, Note (K.)

teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”†

§ 28. It is worth remarking also, that the persons who make this use of Tradition, are often found distinctly advocating the deliberate suppression, in the instruction of the great mass of Christians, of a large portion of the Gospel-doctrines which are the most earnestly set forth in Scripture; as a sort of esoteric mystery, of which ordinary believers are unworthy, and which should be “reserved” as a reward for a long course of pious submission. This system of “reserve” or “economy” is vindicated, by studiously confounding it with the *gradual* initiation of Christians in the knowledge of their religion, in proportion as they are “able to bear it;” *i. e.* able and willing to understand each point that is presented to their minds: and the necessity of gradual teaching,—of reading the first line of a passage before the second,—and the care requisite to avoid teaching any thing, which though true in itself, would be falsely understood by the hearers, is thus confounded with the system of withholding a portion of Gospel-truth from those able and willing to receive it; the system of “shunning to set before men all the counsel of God,” and of having one kind of religion for the initiated

† See Dr. Hawkins on Tradition.

few, and another for the mass of the Christian World. Very different was the Apostle Paul's Gospel, which he assures us, "if it was hid, was hid from them that are lost" (men on the road to destruction, ἀπολλυμένους), "whom the god of this world hath blinded."

Suppression of Gospel-truths may amount to falsification. But the charge of teaching something different from what they inwardly believe, the advocates of this system repel, by alleging that all they do teach is agreeable to Scripture, although they withhold a part, and do not teach *all* that is to be found in Scripture: as if this did not as effectually constitute two different religions as if they had added on something of their own. For, by expunging or suppressing at pleasure, that which remains may become totally different from what the religion would have been if exhibited as a whole.

It has been remarked that every statue existed in the block of marble from which it was carved; and that the Sculptor merely *discloses* it, by removing the superfluous portions;—that the Medicean Venus, for instance, has not in it a single particle which did not originally exist exactly in the same relative position as now; the Artist having *added* nothing, but merely *taken away*. Yet the statue is as widely different a thing from the original block, as if something *had* been added. What should we think of a

man's pleading that such an image is not contemplated in the commandment against *making* an image, because it is not "made," as if it had been moulded, or cast, out of materials *brought together* for the purpose? Should any one scruple to worship a moulded, but not a sculptured image, his scruple would not be more absurdly misplaced, than if he should hold himself bound, in his teaching, not to *add on* to Scripture any thing he did *not* believe to be true, but allowed to suppress any portions of Gospel-truth at his pleasure, and to exhibit to his People the remaining portions, as the whole system of their religion.

It may be added also, that as a Doctrines not clearly revealed. Christian teacher is not authorized either to suppress any portion of the Gospel as unfit for those disposed and able to receive it, or to inculcate as an essential portion of it, any thing not revealed in Scripture, but dependent on Tradition, whether alone or "blended with Scripture," so, he ought not to insist on the acceptance, as essential, of any thing which, even though it may be satisfactorily proved from Scripture, yet is so slightly hinted at there, that till attention has been called to it, and the arguments by which it is supported, brought together, whole Churches for whole generations together, may have studied Scripture without finding it. I do not say that nothing of this

character *should be maintained*, and supported by arguments which may satisfactorily prove it ; but it should not be *maintained as something necessary* to Salvation, unless it is *clearly* revealed to an ordinary reader of candid mind.

For instance, there are some who think that an intermediate state of consciousness,—and others, of unconsciousness,—between death and the resurrection,—may be proved from Scripture ; but I cannot think it justifiable to represent *either* opinion as an essential *article of faith*.

Again, the *call of the Gentiles* to be partakers with the Jews of the privileges of God's People, and the *termination of the Mosaic dispensation*, are *contained*, but not *clearly* revealed, in the Old Testament, and in the discourses of our Lord ; these doctrines are not so *obviously* contained there, as to make them an essential part of the Jewish faith. This, therefore, was a case in which a *fresh and distinct declaration*, supported by miraculous evidence, was fairly to be expected : and *this was accordingly afforded*. A distinct miraculous revelation was made to the Apostle Peter as to this very point.^u

Unsound
reasons
brought in
aid of sound
ones.

§ 29. In saying that the essential doctrines of Christianity are to be found in Scripture, or may be satisfactorily

^u According to our Lord's promise respecting the Holy Spirit:—"He shall teach you all things, and *bring all things to your remembrance*," &c.

proved from it, and that the enactments of any Church, with a view to good government, “decency and order,” derive a sufficient authority *from that very circumstance*, inasmuch as the Apostle commands us to “do all things decently and in order,” and our Heavenly Master has given power to “bind and loose” in respect of such regulations, I do not mean to imply that such reasons always *will*, in fact, prove satisfactory to careless and uncandid reasoners, —to the fanciful, the wilful, and the arrogant. But nothing is in reality gained by endeavouring to add force to sound reasons by the addition of unsound ones. To seek, when men will not listen to valid arguments, for some other arguments which they *will* listen to, will, I am convinced, (to say nothing of its unfairness) be found in the end, to be unwise policy.

Yet I cannot but suspect that the principles I have been deprecating must have been sometimes maintained by persons, not altogether blind to the inconsistent consequences they lead to, but actuated by a desire of impressing on the minds of the multitude not only an additional confidence in the doctrines of our Church, but also that reverence, which is so often found to be deficient, for Church-institutions and enactments, and for regularly-ordained Christian Ministers : and that they have been influenced by a dread of certain consequences as follow-

ing from an adherence to what I have pointed out as the only sound and secure principles.*

Supposed
danger of a
power to
modify an-
cient regu-
lations.

For instance, it has been thought dangerous to acknowledge a power in any Body of uninspired men to depart in the smallest degree from the recorded precedents of the earliest Churches ; including (be it remembered by the way) those existing after the times of the Apostles, and therefore consisting, themselves, of uninspired men. And a danger there certainly is ; a danger of the misuse of any power, privilege, or liberty, entrusted to any one. The Christian course is beset by

* For instance, the view taken (see *Thoughts on the Sabbath*) of the Lord's Day, as a Church festival observed in memory of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week, and not in compliance with the Mosaic law, I have seen objected to, on the ground that "men are apt not to pay so much deference to the enactments of the Church, as to express commands of Scripture." That is to say, although the Mosaic Law be *not* really binding on Christians (for, if it were, and the observance of the Lord's Day were a part of it, *that* would supersede all need of other arguments), yet it is advisable to teach men that it *is*, in order that they may be the more ready to observe the Lord's Day. The Church therefore is to be represented,—and that, to men who by supposition are disposed to *undervalue* Church-authority,—as having taken the liberty to *alter* a divine commandment of acknowledged obligation, by changing the *seventh* day of the week for the *first* (besides alterations in the mode of observance) in compliance with a supposed tradition that the Apostles sanctioned—which it is plain from the Scripture they did not—this transference of the Sabbath. This is surely expecting an *unreasonable* deference for Church-authority from men who, it is supposed, are unwilling to yield to it such a deference as is *reasonable*.

dangers. They are an essential part of our trial on Earth. We are required to be on our guard against them ; but we must never expect here below, to be exempt from them. And there is nothing necessarily gained by exchanging one danger for another ; the danger of erring in our own judgment, for that of following imperfect, uncertain, or corrupted traditions.

But to maintain the right of any Community—a Church, among others—to establish, abrogate, or alter, regulations and institutions of any kind, is understood by some as amounting to an *approval* of every thing that either ever *has* been done, or conceivably *might* be done, by virtue of that claim ; as if a sanction were thus given to perpetual changes, the most rash, uncalled for, and irrational. But what is left to men's *discretion*, is not therefore meant to be left to their *indiscretion*. To maintain that a power exists, is not to maintain either that it matters not how it is used, or again, that it cannot possibly be abused.

The absurdity of such a mode of reasoning would be at once apparent in any other case. For instance, the Senate, Parliament, or other legislative Body of this or any other country, has clearly a *right* to pass or to reject any proposed law that is brought before it ; and has an *equal right* to do the one or the other ; now no one in his senses would understand by this, that

it is *equally right* to do the one or the other ;—that whatever is left to the legislator's decision, must be a matter of absolute indifference ; and that whatever is to be determined by his *judgment*, may fairly be determined according to his *caprice*.

Abuse of power not argument against its existence. A Church,—and the same may be said of a State,—may so far abuse its power, and exceed the just limits of that power, as to make enactments which a man may be bound in conscience to disobey ; as for instance, if either an ecclesiastical or a civil Government should command men (as the Roman Emperors did the early Christians) to join in acts of idolatrous worship ; or (as was done formerly towards the Saxon Clergy) to put away their wives. But this does not do away the truth of the general assertion that “the Powers that be are ordained of God ;”—that both civil and ecclesiastical Governments have a right to make enactments that are *not* contrary to religion or morality.

And again, even of these enactments,—such as a State or a Church does possess a right to make,—it is not only conceivable, but highly probable, that there will be some which may appear to many persons, and perhaps with reason, to be not the very wisest and best. In such a case, a man is bound to do his best to-

wards the alteration of those laws :^y but he is not, in the mean time, exempted from obedience to laws which he may not fully approve.^z For supposing his objections to any law to be well-founded, still, as infallibility does not exist among men, all professions and precepts relative to the duty of submission to Government, would be nugatory, if that duty were to be suspended and remain in abeyance, till an unerring government should arise.

If any one, accordingly, is convinced that a certain Church is essentially unscriptural, he cannot with a sound conscience belong to its communion. But he may consistently adhere to it, even though he should be of opinion that in some non-essential points it has adopted regulations which are not the most expedient. He may still consistently hold these to be binding, as coming from a competent authority, though he may wish, that they had been, or that they should be, settled otherwise.

§ 30. But as there are some persons who are too ready to separate from any religious Community on slight grounds, or even, through mere caprice, to "heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears," it

Difficulty
of ascer-
taining un-
broken suc-
cession.

^y See "Appeal in behalf of Church-Government;" (Houlston;) a very able pamphlet.

^z See Sermon on Obedience to Laws.

has been thought,—or at least maintained,—that the only way of affording complete satisfaction and repose to the scrupulous, and of repressing schism, is to uphold, under the title of “Church-principles,” the doctrine that no one is a member of Christ’s Church, and an heir of the covenanted Gospel-promises, who is not under a Ministry ordained by Bishops descended in an unbroken chain from the Apostles.

Now what is the degree of satisfactory assurance that is thus afforded to the scrupulous consciences of any members of an Episcopal Church? If a man consider it as highly *probable* that the *particular Minister* at whose hands he receives the sacred Ordinances, is really thus apostolically descended, *this* is the very utmost point to which he can, with any semblance of reason, attain : and the more he reflects and inquires, the more cause for hesitation he will find. There is not a Minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree. The sacramental virtue (for such it is, that is implied,—whether the term be used or not,—in the principle I have been speaking of) dependent on the imposition of hands, with a due observance of apostolical usages, by a Bishop, himself duly consecrated, after having been in like manner baptized into the Church, and ordained Deacon

and Priest,—this sacramental virtue, if a single link of the chain be faulty, must, on the above principles, be utterly nullified ever after, in respect of all the links that hang on that one. For if a Bishop has not been duly consecrated, or had not been, previously, rightly ordained, his Ordinations are null; and so are the ministrations of those ordained by him; and their Ordination of others; (supposing any of the persons ordained by him to attain to the episcopal office) and so on, without end. The poisonous taint of informality, if it once creep in undetected, will spread the infection of nullity to an indefinite and irremediable extent.

And who can undertake to pronounce that during that long period usually designated as the Dark Ages, no such taint ever was introduced? Irregularities could not have been wholly excluded without a perpetual miracle; and that no such miraculous interference existed, we have even historical proof. Amidst the numerous corruptions of doctrine and of practice, and gross superstitions, that crept in, during those ages, we find recorded descriptions not only of the profound ignorance and profligacy of life, of many of the Clergy, but also of the grossest irregularities in respect of discipline and form. We read of Bishops consecrated when mere children;—of men officiating who barely knew their letters;—of Prelates ex-

*Informality
common
during the
dark ages.*

pelled, and others put in their places, by violence;—of illiterate and profligate laymen, and habitual drunkards, admitted to Holy Orders; and in short, of the prevalence of every kind of disorder, and reckless disregard of the decency which the Apostle enjoins. It is inconceivable that any one, even moderately acquainted with history, can feel a certainty, or any approach to certainty, that, amidst all this confusion and corruption, every requisite form, was, in every instance, strictly adhered to, by men, many of them openly profane and secular, unrestrained by public opinion, through the gross ignorance of the population among which they lived; and that no one not duly consecrated or ordained, was admitted to sacred offices.

Even in later and more civilized and enlightened times, the probability of an irregularity, though very greatly diminished, is yet diminished only, and not absolutely destroyed. Even in the memory of persons living, there existed a Bishop concerning whom there was so much mystery and uncertainty prevailing as to, when, where, and by whom, he had been ordained, that doubts existed in the mind of many persons whether he had ever been ordained at all. I do not say that there was good ground for the suspicion; but I speak of the fact, that it did prevail; and that the circumstances of the case were such as to make manifest the *possibility* of

such an irregularity occurring under such circumstances.

Now, let any one proceed on the hypothesis that there are, suppose, but a hundred links connecting any particular minister with the Apostles; and let him even suppose that not above half of this number pass through such periods as admit of any possible irregularity; and then, placing at the lowest estimate the probability of defectiveness in respect of each of the remaining fifty, taken separately, let him consider what amount of probability will result from the *multiplying* of the whole together.^a The ultimate consequence must be that any one who sincerely believes that his claim to the benefits of the Gospel-Covenant depends on his own Minister's claim to the supposed sacramental virtue of true ordination, and this again, on perfect Apostolical Succession as above described, must be involved, in proportion as he reads, and inquires, and reflects, and reasons, on the subject, in the most distressing doubt and perplexity.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the advocates of this theory studiously disparage reasoning,

^a Supposing it to be one hundred to one, in each separate case, in favour of the legitimacy and regularity of the transmission, and the links to amount to fifty, (or any other number,) the probability of the unbroken continuity of the whole chain must be computed as $\frac{2}{100}$ of $\frac{2}{100}$ of $\frac{2}{100}$, &c., to the end of the whole fifty.

deprecate all exercise of the mind in reflection, decry appeals to evidence, and lament that even the power of reading should be imparted to the People. It is not without cause that they dread and lament “an Age of too much light,” and wish to involve religion in “a solemn and awful gloom.”^b It is not without cause that, having removed the Christian’s confidence from a rock, to base it on sand, they forbid all prying curiosity to examine their foundation.

Fallacy of
confound-
ing toge-
ther the
apostolical
succession
of a Body
of men and
of each in-
dividual.

The fallacy, indeed, by which, according to the above principles, the Christian is taught to rest his own personal hopes of salvation, on the individual claims to “Apostolical succession” of the particular Minister he is placed under, is one so gross that few are thoughtless enough to be deceived by it in any case where Religion is not concerned;—where, in short, a man has not been taught to make a virtue of uninquiring, unthinking, acquiescence. For the fallacy consists in confounding together the unbroken Apostolical succession of a *Christian Ministry generally*, and the same succession in an unbroken line, of *this or that individual Minister*. The existence of such an *Order of men as Christian Ministers*, continuously from the time of the Apostles to this day, is perhaps as complete a moral certainty, as any historical fact

^b Κλέπτει δὲ τὴν νύκτα ἀμείνω.

can be ; because (independently of the various incidental notices by historians, of such a class of persons) it is plain that if, at the present day, or a century ago, or ten centuries ago, a number of men had appeared in the world, professing (as our Clergy do now) to hold a recognised office in a Christian Church, to which they had been regularly appointed as successors to others, whose predecessors, in like manner, had held the same, and so on, from the times of the Apostles,—if, I say, such a pretence had been put forth by a set of men assuming an office which no one had ever heard of before,—it is plain, that they would at once have been refuted and exposed. And as this will apply equally to each successive generation of Christian Ministers, till we come up to the time when the institution was confessedly new,—that is, to the time when Christian Ministers were appointed by the Apostles, who professed themselves eye-witnesses of the Resurrection, we have (as Leslie has remarked)^e a standing Monument, in the Christian Ministry, of the fact of that event as having been proclaimed immediately after the time when it was said to have occurred. This therefore is fairly brought forward as an evidence of its truth.

But if each man's Christian hope, is made to rest on his receiving the Christian Ordinances

^e Short Method with Deists.

at the hands of a Minister to whom the sacramental virtue that gives efficacy to those ordinances, has been transmitted in unbroken succession from hand to hand, every thing must depend on *that particular* Minister: and *his* claim is by no means established from our merely establishing the uninterrupted existence of *such a class of men as Christian Ministers*. “You teach me,” a man might say, “that my salvation depends on the possession by *you*—the *particular* Pastor under whom I am placed—of a certain qualification; and when I ask for the proof that you possess it, you prove to me that it is possessed *generally* by a *certain class* of persons of whom you are one, and probably by a large majority of them!” How ridiculous it would be thought, if a man laying claim to the throne of some Country should attempt to establish it without producing and proving his own pedigree, merely by showing that that Country had *always been under hereditary regal government!*

Increased danger of Schism. § 31. Then, as to the danger of Schism, nothing can be more calculated to create or increase it, than to superadd to all the other sources of difference among Christians, those additional ones resulting from the theory we are considering. Besides all the

divisions liable to arise relative to the essential *doctrines* of Scripture, and to the most important points in any *system* of Church-Government, Schisms, the most difficult to be remedied, may be created by that theory from *individual cases* of alleged irregularity.

A most remarkable instance of this Schism of the Donatists. is furnished in the celebrated schism of the Donatists, in Africa, in the beginning of the fourth century.^d They differed in no point of doctrine or Church discipline from their opponents, the Orthodox, (that is, the predominant party;) but were at issue with them on the question as to an alleged irregularity in the appointment of a certain Bishop; whose ordinations consequently of other Bishops and Presbyters, they inferred, were void; and hence, the baptisms administered by those ministers were also void, and their whole ministration profane; so that they re-baptized all who joined their party, (as I believe the Greek Church does, to this day) and regarded their opponents in the light of Heathen. And this schism distracted the greater part of the Eastern portion of the Church for upwards of two hundred years.

And an attempt was made in the last Schism of the Non-jurors. century, by the Non-jurors, to introduce, in these realms, the ever spreading

^d See Waddington's Ecclesiastical History, &c.

canker of a similar schism. They denied the episcopal character of those who had succeeded the displaced prelates; and, consequently, regarded as invalid the Orders conferred by them; thus preparing the way for all the consequences resulting from the Donatist-schism.

The sect died away before long, through a happy inconsistency on the part of its supporters; who admitted the claims of the substituted Bishops *on the death of their predecessors*; though it is hard to understand how those who were not true Bishops at first, could *become* such, through a subsequent event, without being re-consecrated; the Presbyters ordained by them, becoming at the same time true Presbyters, though their Ordination *had been* invalid. It seems like maintaining that a woman, who, during her husband's life-time marries another man, and has a family, becomes, on her real husband's death, the lawful wife of the other, and her children legitimate.

More recently still, an attempt was made of the same nature, on the occasion of the suppression (as it was called) of some of the Irish Bishoprics; that is, the *union* of them with others.^e It has been publicly and distinctly

^e I do not mean to maintain that this was seriously believed by all those—some of them men of intelligence and learning—who put it forward. It may very likely have been one of their "*exoteric*

declared that an effort was made to represent this measure as amounting to an “interruption of Apostolical succession ;” though it is not very easy to say how this was to be made out, even on the above principles.^f

In short, there is no imaginable limit to the schisms that may be introduced and kept up through the operation of these principles, advocated especially with a view to the repression of schism.

§ 32. Some have imagined however that since no rule is laid down in Scripture as to the number of persons requisite to form a Christian Community, or as to the mode in which any such Community is to be set on foot, it must follow that persons left to Scripture as their sole decisive authority, will be at liberty,—all, and any of them,—to form and dissolve religious Communities at their pleasure ;—to join, and withdraw from, any Church, as freely as if it were a Club or other such institution ; and to appoint them-

*Irregular
formations
of Christian
Communi-
ties.*

doctrines,” designed only for the Multitude. But, be this as it may, they evidently meant that it should be believed by others, if not by themselves.

^f According to this view, the Apostolical succession must have been long since lost in some parts of England, and the greatest part of Ireland. For there were many such unions existing *before* the Act in question ; such as Bath and Wells, Cork and Ross, Ferns and Leighlin, Lichfield and Coventry, and several others.

selves or others to any ministerial Office, as freely as the members of any Club elect Presidents, Secretaries, and other functionaries.

And it is true that this license has been assumed by weak and rash men; who have thus given occasion to persons of the class who “mistake reverse of wrong for right,” to aim at counteracting one error by advocating another. But so far are these anarchical consequences from being a just result of the principles here maintained, that I doubt whether, on any other subject besides Religion, a man would not be reckoned insane who should so reason.

Analogous
case of civil
Govern-
ments.

To take the analogous case of civil government: hardly any one in his right mind would attempt a universal justification of rebellion, on the ground that men may be placed in circumstances which morally authorize them to do what, in totally *different* circumstances, *would* be rebellion.

Suppose, for instance, a number of emigrants, bound for some Colony, to be shipwrecked on a desert island, such as afforded them means of subsistence, but precluded all reasonable hope of their quitting it: or suppose them to have taken refuge there as fugitives from intolerable oppression, or from a conquering enemy; (no uncommon case in ancient times) or to be the sole survivors of a pestilence

or earthquake which had destroyed the rest of the nation : no one would maintain that these shipwrecked emigrants or fugitives, were bound, or were permitted, to remain—their selves and their posterity—in a state of anarchy, on the ground of there being no one among them who could claim hereditary or other right to govern them. It would clearly be right, and wise, and necessary, that they should regard themselves as constituted, by the very circumstance of their position, a civil Community ; and should assemble to enact such laws, and appoint such magistrates, as they might judge most suitable to their circumstances. And obedience to those laws and governors, as soon as the Constitution was settled, would become a moral duty to all the members of the Community : and this, even though some of the enactments might appear, or might be, (though not at variance with the immutable laws of morality, yet) considerably short of perfection. The King, or other Magistrates thus appointed, would be legitimate rulers : and the laws framed by them, valid and binding. The precept of “submitting to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake,” and of “rendering to all, their due,” would apply in this case as completely as in respect of any Civil Community that exists.

Extraordi-
nary emer-
gencies jus-
tify what
would
otherwise
be wrong.

And yet these men would have been doing what, *in ordinary circumstances*, would have been manifest rebellion. For if these same, or any other, individuals, subjects of our own, or of any existing Government, were to take upon themselves to throw off their allegiance to it, *without* any such necessity, and were to pretend to constitute themselves an independent Sovereign-State, and proceed to elect a King or Senate,—to frame a Constitution, and to enact laws, all resting on their own self-created authority, no one would doubt, that, however wise in themselves those laws might be, and however personally well-qualified the magistrates thus appointed,—they would not be legitimate governors, or valid laws : and those who had so attempted to establish them, would be manifest rebels.

A similar rule will apply to the case of ecclesiastical Communities. If any number of individuals,—not having the plea of an express revelation to the purpose, or again, of their deliberate conviction that the Church they separate from is fundamentally erroneous and unscriptural—take upon themselves to constitute a new Church, according to their own fancy, and to appoint themselves or others to ministerial offices, without having any recognised authority to do so, derived from the ex-

isting religious Community of which they were members, but merely on the ground of supposed personal qualifications, then, however wise in themselves the institutions, and however, in themselves, fit, the persons appointed, there can be no more doubt that the guilt of Schism would be incurred in this case, than that the other, just mentioned, would be an act of rebellion. If the Apostle's censure of "those that cause divisions" does not apply to this case, it may fairly be asked what meaning his words can have.

On the other hand, men placed in the situation of the supposed shipwrecked emigrants or exiles above spoken of, would be as much authorized, and bound, to aim at the advantages of a Religious, as of a Civil Community: only with this difference, arising out of the essential characters of the two respectively; that they would not be authorized in the one case, as they would, in the other, to resort to *secular coercion*. Compliance with civil regulations, may, and must, be *absolutely enforced*; but not so, the profession of a particular Creed, or conformity to a particular mode of Worship.

Another point of distinction between the formation of a Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution arises out of this circumstance, that it was plainly the design of the Apostles that there should be as

Christian Communities designed to afford facilities for intercommunion.

much as possible of *free intercommunion*, and facility of interchange of members, among Christian Churches. Consequently, when it is said, here and elsewhere, that each of these is bound to make such enactments respecting non-essentials, as its governors may judge best, it is not meant that they have to consider merely what would seem *in itself* best, and supposing *they* were the *only Christian Community* existing; but they must also take care to raise up no *unnecessary barrier* of separation between the members of their own and of other—essentially pure—Churches. Any arrangements or institutions, &c. which would tend to check the free intercourse, and weaken the ties of brotherhood, among all Christ's followers throughout the world, should be as much as possible avoided.

This, however, is no exception to the general rule, but an application of it. For, those enactments which should tend to defeat, without necessity, one of the objects which the Apostles proposed, would (however good in themselves) evidently *not* be the best, for that very reason.

But it would be absurd to maintain that men placed in such a situation as has been here supposed, are to be shut out, generation after generation, from the Christian Ordinances and the Gospel-covenant. Their circumstances would constitute them (as many as could be brought to agree in

Christians
bound,
when pos-
sible, to
combine as
a Christian
Society.

the essentials of faith and Christian worship) a Christian Community; and would require them to do that which, if done *without* such necessity, would be schismatical. To make regulations for the Church thus constituted, and to appoint as its ministers the fittest persons that could be found among them, and to celebrate the Christian Rites, would be a proceeding not productive, as in the other case, of division, but of union. And it would be a compliance,—clearly pointed out to them by the Providence which had placed them in that situation,—with the manifest will of our Heavenly Master, that Christians should live in a religious Community, under such Officers and such Regulations as are essential to the existence of every Community.

To say that Christian ministers thus appointed are, to all intents and purposes, real legitimate Christian ministers, and that the Ordinances of such a Church would be no less valid and efficacious (supposing always that they are not in themselves superstitious and unscriptural) than those of any other Church, is merely to say in other words, that it would *be* a real Christian Church; possessing, consequently, in common with *all Communities* of whatever kind, the essential rights of a Community to have Officers and Bye-laws; and possessing also, in common with all *Christian Communities*, (*i. e.*

Churches) the especial sanction of our Lord, and his promise of ratifying ("binding in Heaven") its enactments.^g

It could not have been the Lord's will that men should exclude themselves from his Church. It really does seem not only absurd, but even impious, to represent it as the Lord's will, that persons who are believers in his Gospel, should, in consequence of the circumstances in which his Providence has placed them, condemn themselves and their posterity to live as Heathens, instead of conforming as closely as those circumstances will allow, to the institutions and directions of Christ and his Apostles, by combining themselves into a Christian Society, regulated and conducted, in the best way they can, on Gospel-principles. And if such a Society does enjoy the divine blessing and favour, it follows that its proceedings, its enactments, its officers, are legitimate and apostolical, as long as they are conformable to the principles which the Apostles have laid down and recorded for our use: even as those (of whatever race "after the flesh") who embraced and faithfully adhered to the Gospel, were called by the Apostle "Abraham's seed,"^h and "the Israel of God."ⁱ

^g See in Appendix, Note (L), a quotation from an Appeal of Luther's in 1520, cited in D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation."

^h Rom. v. 16.

ⁱ Gal. vi. 16.

The Ministers of such a Church as I have been supposing, would rightly claim "Apostolical succession," because they would *rightfully hold the same office* which the Apostles conferred on those "Elders whom they ordained in every City." And it is impossible for any one of sound mind, seriously to believe that the recognition of such claims in a case like the one here supposed, affords a fair precedent for men who should wantonly secede from the Church to which they had belonged; and take upon themselves to ordain ministers and form a new and independent Church according to their own fancy.

Apostolical
succession
dependent
on adhe-
rence to
apostolical
principles.

§ 33. I have spoken of seceding from "the Church to which they had belonged," because, in each case the presumption^k is in favor of *that*; not, necessarily, in favour of the Church to which a man's *ancestors* may formerly have belonged,¹ or the one which can boast the greatest *antiquity*,

Presump-
tion in
favor of
the Church
to which
one actually
belongs.

^k See Rhetoric, Part i. ch. 3, § 2.

¹ Accordingly, if we suppose the case of the Romish Church reforming all its errors, and returning to the state of its greatest purity, although we should with joy "give the right hand of fellowship" to its members, it would be utterly unjustifiable for any member of our Church to throw off his allegiance to it and go over to the Church of Rome, on the ground of his *ancestors* having belonged to that; nor would such a reform confer on the Bishop of Rome any power over the Anglican Church.

or, which is *established* by the Civil Government. The Church, whatever it is, in which each man was originally enrolled a member, has the first claim to his allegiance, supposing there is nothing in its doctrines or practice which he is convinced is unscriptural and wrong. He is of course bound, in deference to the higher authority of Christ and the Apostles, to renounce its communion, if he does feel such a conviction; but not, from motives of mere fancy, or worldly advantage.

All separation, either a duty or a sin.

All separation, in short, must be *either a duty, or a sin.*^m

^m It may be necessary perhaps here to remind the reader that I am speaking of *separating* from, and *renouncing*, some Church; not, of merely *joining* and becoming a member of some other. This latter does not imply the former, except when there is some *essential point of difference* between the two Churches. When there is none, a man's becoming a member of another Church on changing his residence,—as for instance, a member of the Anglican Church, on going to reside in Scotland or America, where Churches essentially in agreement with ours exist—this is the very closest conformity to the principles and practice of the Apostles. In their days (and it would have been the same, always, and every where, had their principles been universally adhered to) a Christian of the Church of Corinth for instance, on taking up his abode, suppose, at Ephesus, where there was a Christian Church, differing perhaps in some non-essential customs and forms, but agreeing in essentials, was received into that Church as a brother: and this was so far from implying his *separation* from the former, that he would be received into the Ephesian Church only on letters of recommendation* from the Corinthian.

* 'Επιστολαὶ συστατικαὶ. See 2 Cor.

And the Christian's obligation to submit to the (not unscriptural) Laws and Officers of his Church, being founded on the principles above explained, is independent of all considerations of the regularity or irregularity of the original formation of that Church: else indeed, no one could be certain what were his duties as a member of a certain Church, without entering on long and difficult researches into ecclesiastical history; such as are far beyond the reach of ninety-nine persons in the hundred. A certain Church may, suppose, have originated in a rash separation from another Church, on insufficient grounds; but for an individual to separate from it *merely for that reason*, would be not escaping but incurring the guilt of Schism.ⁿ

Obligation to conform to the ordinances of a Church not dependent on the regularity of its original formation.

It may indeed often be very desirable to attempt the re-union of Christian Communities that had been separated on insufficient grounds: but no individual is justified in renouncing, from motives of mere taste or convenience, the communion of the Church he belongs to, if he can remain in it with a safe conscience.

As for the question, what are, and what are not, to be accounted essential points,—what will, and what will not, justify, and require,

ⁿ For some very sensible and valuable remarks on this subject, see Hinds's History of the Rise and Early Progress of Christianity.

separation,—it would be foreign from the present purpose to discuss it. The differences between two Churches may appear essential, and non-essential, to two persons equally conscientious, and equally careful in forming a judgment. All I am insisting on is, that the matter is one which does call for that careful and conscientious judgment. A man should, deliberately, and with a sense of deep responsibility, make up his mind, as to what is, or is not, to the best of his judgment, essential, before he resolves on taking, or not taking, a step which must in every case be either a duty or a sin.

Apprehension of what is called unsettling men's minds.

§ 34. It may be said however that it is superfluous to enter at all on the consideration of what *would* be allowable and right under some *supposed* circumstances, which are not our own; and to decide beforehand for some imaginary emergency, that may never occur; at least never to ourselves.

It may be represented as an empty and speculative question to inquire whether our Ministry derive their authority from the Church, or the Church from them, as long as the rights *both* of the Church and its Ministers, are but acknowledged. And if any one is satisfied both that our Ministers are ordained by persons descended in an unbroken series of Episcopal Ordination from the Apostles, and also that they

are the regularly-appointed and recognised Officers of a Christian Community constituted on Apostolical principles, it may be represented as impertinent to trouble him with questions as to *which* of these two things it is that gives them the rightful claim to that deference which, as it is, he is willing to pay to them.

It is in this way that the attempt is often made, and not seldom with success, to evade the discussion of important general principles, and thus to secure an uninquiring acquiescence in false assumptions which will not stand the test of examination, and which when once admitted will lead to very important and very mischievous practical results. Why should we unsettle men's minds—one may hear it said—by speculations on any imaginary or impossible case, when they are satisfied as they are? As long as any one will but believe and do what he ought, what matters it whether his reasons for acquiescence are the most valid, or not? And then, when, in this way, men's minds have been “settled” in false notions, some of them are likely to follow out a wrong principle into the pernicious consequences to which it fairly leads; and others again become most dangerously, and perhaps incurably, *unsettled*, when the sandy foundation they have been taught to build on happens to be washed away.

If, as has been above remarked, a man is taught that view of Apostolical succession which makes every thing depend on the unbroken series between the apostles and the *individual* minister from whom each man receives the Sacraments, or the individual bishop conferring Ordination,—a fact which never can be ascertained with certainty—and he is then presented with proofs, *not of this*, but of a different fact instead,—the Apostolical succession, *generally*, of the great Body of the ministers of his Church ;—and if he is taught to acquiesce with consolatory confidence in the regulations and ordinances of the Church, not, on such grounds as have been above laid down, but, on the ground of their exact conformity to the model of the “ancient Church,” which exact conformity is, in many cases, more than can be satisfactorily proved, and in some, can be easily *disproved*, the result of the attempt so to settle men’s minds, must be, with many, the most distressing doubt and perplexity. And others again when taught to “blend with Scripture,” as a portion of Revelation the traditions of the first three, or first four, or first seven or fifteen centuries, may find it difficult to understand when, and where, and why, they are to stop short abruptly in the application of the principles they have received :—why, if one general Council is to be admitted as having divine au-

thority to bind the conscience, and supersede private judgment, another is to be rejected by private judgment: and that too, by the judgment of men who are not agreed with each other, or even with themselves, whether the council of Trent, for instance, is to be regarded as the beginning of the Roman Apostasy, or as a promising omen of an improvement in the Church of Rome. That man must be strangely constituted who can find consolatory security for his faith in such a guide;—who can derive satisfactory confidence from the oracles of a Porteus!

§ 35. Moreover, the supposed case of Christians deprived of a regular succession of Episcopally-ordained Ministers, and left to determine what course they ought, under such circumstances, to take, is *not* inconceivable, or impossible, or unprecedented; nor again, *even if it were*, would the consideration of such a question be necessarily an unprofitable speculation; because it will often happen that by putting a supposed case (even when such as could not possibly occur) we can the most easily and most clearly ascertain on what *principle* a person is acting. Thus when Plato^o puts the impossible case of your

Supposed case, neither an impossible one, nor useless even if it were.

^o Atque hoc loco, philosophi quidam, minime mali illi quidem,

possessing the ring of Gyges,^p which, according to the legend, could make the bearer invisible, and demands how you would then act, he applies a kind of test, which *decomposes*, as the chemists say, the complex mass of motives that may influence a man, and calls on you to consider whether you abstain from bad actions through fear of the censure of the world, or from abhorrence of evil in itself.

So again—to take another instance—if any one is asked how men ought to act when living under a Government professing, and enforcing under penalties, a false religion, and requiring of its subjects idolatrous worship, and other practices contrary to Scripture, if he should object to the question, on the ground that there is no prospect of *his* being so circumstanced, and that he is living, and may calculate on continuing to live, under a Government which inculcates a true religion, it would be justly in-

sed non satis acuti, fictam et commenticiam fabulam prolatam dicunt a Platone : quasi vero ille, aut factum id esse, aut fieri potuisse defendat. Hæc est vis hujus annuli et hujus exempli, si nemo sciturus, nemo ne suspicaturus quidem sit, cum aliquid, divitiarum, potentiæ, dominationis, libidinis, caussa feceris,—si id diis hominibusque futurum sit semper ignotum, sisne facturus. Negant id fieri posse. Quanquam potest id quidem; sed quæro, quod negant posse, id si posset, quidnam facerent? Urgent rustice sane: negant enim posse, et in eo perstant. Hoc verbum quid valeat, non vident. Cum enim quærimus, si possint celare, quid facturi sint, non quærimus, possintne celare,” &c.—*Cic. de Off.* b. iii. c. 9.

^p Rhetoric, pt. i. c. 2, § 8.

ferred that he was conscious of something unsound in his principles, from his evading a test that goes to ascertain whether he regards religious truth and the command of God, as things to be adhered to at all events, or merely, when coinciding with the requisitions of Government.

So also, in the present case : when a Church possesses Ministers who are the regularly-appointed officers of a Christian Community constituted on evangelical principles, and who are also ordained by persons descended in an unbroken series from those ordained by the Apostles, the two circumstances *coincide*, on which, according to the two different principles, respectively, above treated of, the legitimacy and apostolical commission of Christian Ministers may be made to depend. Now in order to judge fairly, and to state clearly the decision, *which* foundation we resolve to rest on, it is requisite to propose a case (even supposing—which is very far from being the fact—that it could not actually occur) in which these two circumstances do *not* come together ; and then to pronounce which it is that we regard as essential.

§ 36. As a matter of fact, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Apostles did “ordain Elders in every city.” Even

Cases of a moral necessity for separation.

if there had been no record of their doing so, we might have inferred it from the very fact of their instituting Christian Societies; since every Society must have Officers; and the founder of a Society will naturally take upon him to nominate the first Officers; as well as to “set in order the rest” of the appointments.^a And those Officers, acting in the name and on the behalf of the Community, would, of course, appoint others to succeed them; and so on, from generation to generation. As long as every thing went on correctly in each Church, and its doctrines and practices remained sound, there would be nothing to interrupt this orderly course of things. But whenever it happened that the Rulers of any Church departed from the Christian faith and practice which it is their business to preserve,—when, for instance, they corrupted their worship with superstitions, made a traffic of “indulgences,” and “taught for doctrines the commandments of men,” by “blending” human traditions with Scripture, and making them, either wholly or in part, the substitute, as a rule of faith, for the records of inspiration,—in any such case, it became the duty of all those who perceived the inroads of such errors, to aim at the reformation of them; and, when all or any of the Spiritual Pastors of such a Church obstinately stood out against

reform, to throw off their subjection to persons so abusing their sacred office, and, at all events, reform themselves as they best could. It is as plain a duty for men so circumstanced to obey their Heavenly Master, and forsake those who have apostatized from Him, as it would be for the loyal portion of a garrison of soldiers to revolt from a general who had turned traitor to his King, and was betraying the city into the enemy's hands. So far from being rebellious subjects in *thus* revolting, they would be guilty of rebellion if they did not.

In like manner, the very circumstances in which such a Body of reformers, as I have been alluding to, are placed, confer on them that independence which they would have been unjustifiable in assuming wantonly. The right is bestowed, and the duty imposed on them, of separation from the unreformed, which, under opposite circumstances, would have been schismatical. They are authorized, and bound, by the very nature of their situation, either to subsist as a distinct Community or to join some other Church ;^r even as the vitality which Nature has

^r An instance of this was very recently afforded by the people of Zillerthal, in the Austrian dominions ; who, being deliberately convinced of the errors of the Church in which they had been brought up, underwent, in consequence of their refusal of compliance, a long series of vexatious persecution, and ultimately forsook their home, and found refuge and freedom of conscience in the territory of Prussia.

conferred on a scion of a tree, enables it, *when cut off* from the parent-stock, either to push forth fresh roots of its own, or to unite, as a graft, with the stock of some kindred tree.

Conduct
suitable for
conscienti-
ous seced-
ers. It is for men so circumstanced to do their best according to their own deliberate judgment, to meet their difficulties, to supply their deficiencies and to avail themselves of whatever advantages may lie within their reach. If they have among their number, Christian Ministers of several Orders, or of one Order,—if they can obtain a supply of such from some other sound Church,—or if they can unite themselves to such a Church with advantage to the great ultimate objects for which Churches were originally instituted,—all these are advantages not to be lightly thrown away. But the unavoidable absence of any of these advantages, not only is not to be imputed to them as a matter of blame, but, by imposing the *necessity*, creates the *right*, and the *duty*, of supplying their deficiencies as they best can. Much as they may regret being driven to the alternative, they ought not to hesitate in their decision, when their choice lies between adherence to the human Governors of a Church, and to its Divine Master;—between “the form of godliness, and the power thereof;”—between the means and the end;—between unbroken

apostolical succession of individuals, and uncorrupted Gospel principles.

§ 37. Persons so situated ought to be on their guard against two opposite mistakes: the one is, to undervalue the privileges of a Christian Community, by holding themselves altogether debarred from the exercise of such powers as naturally and essentially belong to every Community; the other mistake is to imagine that whatever they have an undoubted *right* to do, they would necessarily be *right* in doing. In no other subject perhaps would such a confusion of thought be likely to arise, as is implied by the confounding together of things so different as these two. Although the legislature (as I have above remarked) has an undoubted right to pass, or to reject, any Bill, a man would be deemed insane who should thence infer that they are *equally right* in doing either the one or the other. So also the Governors of a Church are left, in respect of ordinances and regulations not prescribed or forbidden in Scripture, to their own judgment; but they are bound to act according to the *best* of their judgment. What is left to their discretion is not therefore left to their caprice; nor are they to regard every point that is not *absolutely essential*, as therefore *absolutely indifferent*.

Mistakes to be guarded against by Reformers when compelled to separation.

They have an undoubted right, according to the principles I have been endeavouring to establish, to appoint such Orders of Christian Ministers, and to allot to each such functions as they judge most conducive to the great ends of the Society ; they may assign to the *whole*, or to a *portion* of these, the office of ordaining others as their successors ; they may appoint *one* superintendent of the rest, or *several* ; under the title of Patriarch, Archbishop, Bishop, Moderator, or any other that they may prefer ; they may make the appointment of them for life, or for a limited period,—by election, or by rotation,—with a greater, or a less extensive, jurisdiction ; and they have a similar discretionary power with respect to Liturgies, Festivals, Ceremonies, and whatever else is left at large in the Scriptures.

Province of
discretion.

Now to infer that all possible determinations of all these and similar points, would be equally expedient, and equally wise, and good, would be an absurdity so gross that in no other case not connected with religion, would men need even to be warned against it. In fact it would go to do away the very existence of any such attributes as “wisdom,”—“prudence,”—“discretion,”—“judgment,” &c. altogether : for there is evidently no room for the exercise of them in matters *not* left to our *choice*, and in which the course we are to pursue is

decided *for* us, and distinctly marked out by a higher Authority ; nor again is there any room for them in matters where there is not a right and a wrong,—a better and a worse ; and where the decision is a matter of total indifference ; as in the choice between two similar sheets of paper to begin writing on, when both are lying within one's reach. The *sole* province of prudent and cautious deliberation is in cases which *are* left to our decision, and in which we may make a *better or a worse* decision.

The mistakes, however, which I have been alluding to, have been not unfrequently made in what relates to the powers possessed by Christian Communities, and the mode of exercising these powers. For instance, at the time of the great Reformation, some Bodies of Christians found themselves without any Bishop among their number ; and formed what are called Presbyterian Churches. Some members accordingly of these Churches have felt themselves called upon in self-defence to decry Episcopacy, as a form of Government not instituted by the Apostles, and, *consequently*, as one which all Christians are *bound to reject*. Erroneous as, I am convinced, their premiss was, they were, on the above principles, still more erroneous in drawing that conclusion from it. Others of them again lamented their want of Episcopacy ; considering that form of

Instances of
the above
mistakes.

government as *having* the apostolical sanction, and *consequently*, as *obligatory* and *indispensable* to be retained, when possible ; but to them, *unattainable*, from the interruption of episcopal succession. And while some presume to exclude all Presbyterians from the pale of Christ's universal Church—professing at the same time, in words, what they virtually nullify by their interpretations, that “Holy Scripture contains all things *necessary to salvation*,” others again compassionate and sympathize with the supposed *unavoidable* deficiency in the Presbyterian Churches.

Now that all these parties are mistaken in their views (though a mere mistake, when not accompanied with a want of charity, is not deserving of severe censure) must be evident to any one who embraces the principles which in the outset I endeavoured to establish. It follows from those principles, that the Bodies of Christians we have been speaking of, *had* full power to retain or to restore, or to originate, whatever form of Church-government they, in their deliberate and cautious judgment, might deem best for the time, and country, and persons, they had to deal with ; whether exactly similar, or not, to those introduced by the Apostles ; provided nothing were done contrary to Gospel-precepts and principles. They were, therefore, perfectly at liberty to appoint Bishops,

even if they had none that had joined in the reformation ; or to discontinue the appointment, *even if they had* : whichever they were convinced was the most conducive, under existing circumstances, to the great objects of all Church-government. And though their decision of this point ought to have been very greatly influenced by their belief as to what were the forms adopted by the Apostles (which must have been not only wise, but the very wisest, *for those times and persons*) they had no reason to hold themselves *absolutely bound* to adhere, always and every where, to those original models. Indeed, to so considerable a degree have all Churches judged themselves at liberty to depart from the exact model of the earliest institutions—especially (as I formerly remarked) in respect of that important change introduced,—whether wisely or unwisely,—by, I believe, all of what are called Episcopal Churches ; that of having several bishops in one Church, instead of making each Diocese, as appears to have been the apostolical system, an entire and distinct Church ; so considerable, I say, is the liberty in this respect, that has been assumed by all Churches, that those who speak of all Christians being strictly bound to conform in every point to the exact pattern of the primitive institutions, can hardly wonder if they find imputed to them either great want of know-

ledge, or of reflection, in themselves, or else, a design to take advantage of the ignorance or inattention of others.

Erroneous
views se-
ductive to
the feelings
and imagi-
nation.

§ 38. I have specified the want of “attentive reflection” in applying rightly in practice the knowledge men do possess, as tending to foster erroneous notions, because it is probably both a more common and a more dangerous defect than mere want of sufficient knowledge. And it may be added, that it arises not so often from original deficiency in the mental powers, as from neglect to exercise them. There are many who inadvertently, and not a few who advisedly and designedly, resign themselves, in all matters pertaining to morals or religion, to the impressions produced on their imagination and feelings; and rather applaud than reproach themselves for not awaiting the decisions of calm judgment, or for allowing their judgment to be biassed. To such persons, there is, it must be acknowledged, something very captivating and seductive in the notions I have been censuring; and not the less, from their being somewhat vague and dimly apprehended, incapable of abiding the test of sober examination, and invested with some of that “mysterious and solemn gloom,” which has been put forth expressly by some of their advocates, as a recommendation. There is something

to many minds awfully and mystically sublime in the idea of the “decisions of the Catholic Church,” and of “Catholic Councils, convened in the name of Christ, and whose deliberations are overruled, and their decrees authoritative,”—in the idea of the “Sacramental character of Ordination,” conferred by persons who have derived a mystical virtue from the successive imposition of hands up to the times of the Apostles;—and of the “priestly” character, (that of *Hiereus*) thus imparted, and the “Sacrifices” offered at an “altar;”—of a “primitive doctrine always to be found somewhere in the Catholic traditions,” &c.: especially when these matters are treated of in solemn and imposing language, of that peculiar kind of dazzling mistiness whose effect is to convey at first to ordinary readers a striking impression, with an appearance of being perfectly intelligible at the first glance, but to become more obscure and doubtful at the second glance, and more and more so, the more attentively it is studied by a reader of clear understanding; so as to leave him utterly in doubt, at the last, which of several meanings it is meant to convey, or whether any at all.

The rule of “*omne ignotum pro mirifico*,” applies most emphatically to such doctrines treated of in such language. The very simplicity and plainness of the reasoning by which,

in the foregoing pages, the divine authority of a Christian Church, and consequently of its regulations and its ministers, are deduced direct from the sanction given by Christ Himself as interpreted by his Apostles, is likely to be, to some minds, no recommendation, but the contrary.

Views likely to mislead the Clergy. And as men are of course less likely to exercise a clear and unbiassed judgment in respect of any theory which tends especially to exalt their own persons, and invest them with mysterious powers and awful dignity, the *Clergy* accordingly are under a peculiar temptation^s to lean too favourably, and with too little of rigorous examination, towards a system which confers the more elevation and grandeur on *them*, in proportion as it detracts from the claims of the entire Community. It is not the most flattering to them to be urged to say continually, not only in words, but by their conduct, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and us, your Servants for Christ’s sake;”—to be taught that they are merely the Functionaries of the particular Church of which they are members,—that it is in that

* The minds of many persons among the Laity are so constituted as to make the same temptation very little less powerful to them, than to the Priesthood; for reasons set forth in the Essay (3d Series) on “Vicarious Religion.”

capacity only that they derive their station and power from Christ, by virtue of the sanction given by Him to Christian Communities;—that their authority therefore comes direct from the Society so constituted, in whose name and behalf they act, as its representatives, just to that extent to which it has empowered and directed them to act. These views do indeed leave them a most awfully important and dignified office, as Servants in “the House of God,”—(the “Temple of the Holy Ghost,”)—as Stewards (*i. e.* dispensers; *οικονομοι*) of divine truth to his People, and as Messengers from Christ, (so far as they “set forth his true and lively word, and duly administer his Holy Sacraments,”) as having been appointed conformably to his will. But although their title is thus placed on the secure basis of a clear divine sanction given, once for all, to *every* regularly-appointed minister of any Christian Community constituted on Gospel principles, instead of being made to depend on a long chain, the soundness of many of whose links cannot be ascertained, yet this last is a system more flattering to human weakness; inasmuch as it represents the Priesthood as comparatively independent of each particular Church, and derives their Church’s authority rather from them than theirs from it.

Error of
making the
authority
of a Church
emanate
from that of
its Minis-
ters.

For, according to this system, the sacramental virtue of Holy Orders, which is indispensable for all the christian ordinances and means of Grace, is inherent indefeasibly in each individual, who has derived it, in no degree from any particular Community, but solely from the Bishop whose hands were laid on him ; who derived *his* power to administer this sacrament, altogether from Consecration by another Bishop—not necessarily a member of the same particular Church, but obtaining his power again from another ; and so on, up to the apostolic times. On this system the Church is made a sort of appendage to the Priesthood ; not, the Ministry, to the Church.[†] A People separated from their Ministers by some incurable disagreement as to Christian doctrine, even supposing these last to have occasioned it by an utter apostasy from Gospel truth,—would be left (supposing they could not obtain other min-

[†] That pernicious popular error, which confounds the Church with the *Clergy* (see note to § 33,) as if the Spiritual Community consisted only of its Officers, is partly kept up perhaps by men's neglecting to notice one peculiarity belonging to Christ's Kingdom at its first *establishment* ; viz. that it did, then, consist of Ministers only ; though it was by no means designed so to continue. *All* the Disciples who constituted the infant Church were those destined to be employed in various offices therein ; so that an inattentive reader is liable to confound together what our Lord said to them *as Ministers*, and what *as Members* ;—as Rulers of a Church, and as the Church itself.

isters qualified by the same kind of transmission of Sacramental Virtue) totally and finally shut out from the pale of Christ's universal Church, and from his "covenanted mercies;" while the Ministers, on the contrary, though they might be prohibited by civil authority, or prevented by physical force, from exercising their functions within a particular district, would still, even though antichristian in doctrine and in life, retain their office and dignity unimpaired,—the Sacramental Virtue conferred on them by Ordination, and the consequent efficacy of their acts, undiminished.

§ 39. And this is not merely an inference fairly deducible from the principles of the system. I have even met with persons who acknowledged that, if a Bishop, of our own Church for instance, who had been, for some crime, removed and degraded by regular process, should think proper afterwards to ordain men Priests or Deacons, though he and they would be legally punishable, still his Ordinations would be valid, and these men consequently (however morally unfit) real Clergymen, capable of exercising the spiritual functions. This is to recognise a fearful power, and that, placed in the very worst hands, of producing and keeping up schism with something of an apparent divine sanction to give it

Case of deposed Bishops and Presbyters.

strength.^u I need hardly remark that, according to the principles I have been endeavouring to maintain, a Bishop when removed from his Diocese, (whether for any crime, or otherwise) and not appointed to any other, ceases altogether, *ipso facto*, to be a Bishop,^x and has no more power or right to ordain, or to exercise any other episcopal function than a layman; that is, till the same, or some other Christian Church, shall think proper to receive him as a Bishop.

On the same principle, the acts of a Presbyter, or Deacon, or other Minister, of any Church cease to be valid, as soon as ever the Christian Community in which he was appointed, withdraws its sanction from his acts. If another Church think fit to receive him as a Minister, they have an undoubted right to do so; and he then becomes a Minister of that Church. So he does also, when *not* expelled from the Society to which he originally belonged, supposing the Church to which he transfers himself *thinks fit to recognise* the Ordinations of the other; which they may do, or refuse to do, entirely at their own discretion. This is a point which every Church has a full right to determine according to its own judgment.

^u See above, § 32.

^x For a Bishop, it should be observed, does not, in becoming such, enter on a new *Profession*, (as he did on taking orders,) but only on a new *Office* in his profession.

And as for the individual himself who is regularly deprived by his Church, if, on becoming a Clergyman, he engaged (as is required by, I believe, most existing Churches) that he would follow *no other* profession,^y of course he cannot absolve himself from that engagement; but must continue so far a Clergyman, though with suspended functions. Moreover a Church has a *right*,—though I think such a regulation a very unwise one,—to recognise as valid the acts of a degraded Minister; (while subjecting him nevertheless to penalties for performing such acts) or of a Layman.

Concerning several points of this class,—such as the validity of lay-baptism, or of baptism by heretics or schismatics, &c. questions have been often raised, which have been involved in much unnecessary perplexity, from its being common to mix up together what are in fact *several distinct questions*, though relating to the *same subject*. For instance, in respect of the validity of Lay-baptism, three important and perfectly distinct questions may be raised; no one of which is answered by the answering, either way, of the others: viz. 1st. What has a

^y It would be, I am convinced, very advantageous that this rule should be modified as regards *Deacons*. We might avail ourselves of the services of some very useful assistants, if we would admit to this subordinate office some who could not maintain themselves wholly, without resorting (as the Apostle Paul did) to some secular employment.

Church the *right* to determine as to this point? 2dly. What is the *wisest* and best determination it can make? and, 3dly. What *has* this or that particular Church *actually* determined? Now persons who are agreed concerning the answer to one of these questions, may yet differ concerning the others; and *vice versâ*.²

System of
tradition-
ists incapa-
ble of being
supported
by clear ar-
guments.

§ 40. But to return to the consideration, generally, of the whole system of what is called “Catholic tradition,” &c. which I have been censuring; it is calculated, as has been said, to produce at the first glance a striking and imposing effect, and to recommend itself strongly to the imagination and the feelings of some persons: but will not stand the test of a close examination. The advocates of these doctrines, accordingly, either from a consciousness of this, or else from indistinctness in their own conception, often set them forth with something of oracular obscurity and ambiguity, half concealed behind a veil, as it were, of mystery; as something of which the full import and complete proof were to be reserved for a chosen few. And when clear evidence is demanded of a sufficient foundation for the high pretensions put forth, and the implicit submission that is demanded, we are sometimes met by a rebuke of the “pride of

² See Appendix, Note (M.)

human intellect," and of the presumptuous expectation of having every thing that we are to believe made perfectly level to our understanding, and satisfactorily explained.

No one, it may be said, would believe in God, if he were to insist on first obtaining a clear and full comprehension of the nature and attributes of such a Being; an explanation,—such as no man of sense would think of giving, or of seeking,—of the divine attributes, brought down to the capacity of such a Being as man. Nor would any one believe in the Christian Revelation, if he were to require, previously, to have a clear and full comprehension of the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Redemption, of the Trinity, and of every thing else appertaining to the Gospel-scheme. We must content ourselves, therefore, we are told, with faint, indistinct, and imperfect notions on religious subjects, unless we would incur deserved censure for want of faith.

How often and how successfully the fallacy here sketched out has been employed, is really wonderful, considering how totally different and entirely unconnected are the two things which are thus confounded together; the clear or indistinct notion of the *subject-matter* itself,—of the fact or proposition—that is before us; and, the clear or indistinct *notion of the evidence* of it,—of the reasons for believing it. A moment's

reflection is sufficient for any one to perceive the difference between the two ; and yet, in the loose language of careless or sophistical argument, they are continually confused together, and spoken of indiscriminately, as if they were the same thing.

Every one, whether possessing Christian faith or not, believes firmly,—and must believe,—and that, on the clearest evidence,—in the existence of many things concerning which he has but a very imperfect knowledge, and can form but indistinct and confused ideas of their nature ; while to believe in whatever is proposed to us without any *clear proof* that it is *true*,—with an imperfect and indistinct apprehension of any *reason* for believing it,—is usually regarded as a mark of credulous weakness. And, on the other hand, some description, narrative, or statement, may be, in itself, perfectly clear and intelligible, and yet may be very doubtful as to its truth, or may be wholly undeserving of credit.

For instance, there is, I suppose, no one who seriously doubts the existence of something which we call Soul,—or Mind—be it Substance or Attribute, material or immaterial—and of the mutual connexion between it and the Body. Yet how very faint and imperfect a notion it is that we can form of it, and of many of its pheno-

mena that are of daily occurrence! The partial suspension of mental and bodily functions during Sleep,—the effects of opium and other drugs, on both body and mind; the influence again exercised by volition, and by various mental emotions, on the muscles, and on other parts of the bodily frame, and many other of these phenomena, have exercised for ages the ingenuity of the ablest men to find even any approximation towards but an imperfect explanation of them. Yet the *evidence on which we believe in the reality* of these and of many other things no less dimly and partially understood, is perfect.

On the other hand, the characters, transactions, &c. represented by dramatic writers, or described by historians, are often as *clearly intelligible* as it is possible for any thing to be; yet from the total want of evidence, or from the want of clear and decisive evidence, as to their *reality*, we regard them as either entire fictions, or mixtures of fable and truth, or as more or less likely to have actually existed.^a The character and conduct of Lear, for instance, or Othello, of Hamlet, and Macbeth, are perfectly intelligible; though it is very doubtful how far the tales which suggested to

^a See Rhetoric, part i. c. 2, § 2. "On the plausible and the historically probable."

Shakspeare the idea of most of his dramas had any foundation in fact, or were originally fictitious. Many again of the Orations recorded by the ancient Greek and Roman historians are as easily and plainly to be understood as any that are reported in our own times ; but in what degree each of these is a faithful record of what was actually spoken, is a point on which we have, in some cases, a slight and imperfect evidence ; and in others, none that deserves the name.

Fallacies
resorted to
on religious
subjects.

§ 41. In all subjects where religion is not concerned, no one of ordinary good sense ever confounds together two things so dissimilar and unconnected as those I have been speaking of. But in what pertains to religion, the fallacy is, as I have said, often introduced. Yet Religion does not, in this respect, really differ from other subjects.

Our Saviour's character and his teaching were matter of wondering perplexity to all around Him ; even in a far greater degree than after the establishment of his Kingdom, on his personal ministry being completed ; both because the Jews were full of the expectation of a totally different kind of Deliverer, and because great part of his discourses were not even designed to be fully intelligible, at the

time, to his own disciples ; but to be explained afterwards by the occurrence of the events He alluded to. Some of his followers, accordingly, “went back and walked no more with Him,” on the occasion of one of these discourses. But the Apostles, who adhered to Him, did so, neither from having any clearer notions concerning his revelations, (for we often find it recorded that “they understood not this saying,” &c.) nor again, from being satisfied to believe without any clear proof of his high pretensions ; but because they “believed, and were sure that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God,” on such evidence as He had Himself appealed to : “the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.” Dim, and indistinct, and imperfect as were still their notions (as to a great degree, ours must be also) concerning “the Son of God,” it was no indistinct or imperfect evidence on which they believed that He was so.

A converse case is that of the several false Christs who afterwards arose. “I am come,” says our Lord, “in my Father’s name,” (with such manifestations of divine power as testified his coming from God) “and ye receive me not ; if another shall come in his own name,” (*viz.* requiring acceptance on his own bare word, without any miraculous credentials) “him ye

will receive.”^b *Their* teaching, their pretensions, and promises, were as clearly intelligible to the greater part of the Jews—because falling in with the prevailing belief and expectations,—as those of Jesus had been (even to his own disciples) obscure, perplexing, or unintelligible. Accordingly, vast multitudes followed these pretenders, without requiring any clear and sufficient evidence of the *truth* of their pretensions: and they followed them to their own and their Country’s ruin.

The very history of our own religion, therefore, supplies us here with an illustration of the distinction I have been speaking of. On the one side we have a revelation, itself dimly and partially understood, and doubtful, in great part, as to its meaning, but with clear evidence that it really came from God: on the other, a pretended revelation, containing, to those it was proposed to, no doubts or difficulties as to its sense and its design, but supported by no evidence that could satisfy an unprejudiced mind, bent on the attainment of truth.

False views
of what is
faith.

§ 42. However plausible then the system I have been objecting to may appear to any one,—however imposing and mysteriously sublime,—however gratifying and

^b See Sermon on the “Name Emmanuel:” and also Cruden’s Concordance on the word “Name.”

consolatory to the feelings—let him not therefore neglect to inquire for the proofs by which its high pretensions are to be sustained ; but rather examine with the more care the foundation on which so vast a superstructure is made to rest. Let no one be deterred from this by fierce denunciations against the presumptuousness of all inquiry, and all use of private judgment in religious matters ; and by eulogies on the virtue of faith ; remembering that the “*faith*” thus recommended is precisely that *want of faith* for which those Jews just mentioned were so severely condemned. They refused to listen to good evidence, and assented to that which was worthless.

And let no one allow himself to be persuaded that he is evincing an humble piety, acceptable to the “*jealous God*,” in hastily giving credence to the pretensions to divine authority put forth in behalf of uninspired men, (not producing the miraculous “*Signs of an Apostle*”) by those who are for blending “*Tradition with Scripture*,” and “*following the dictates of inspiration wherever found, whether in Scripture or Antiquity ;*” and who pronounce according to their own arbitrary choice, what are, and what are not, the general Councils whose “*deliberations were overruled by the Holy Spirit and their decrees consequently authoritative.*”

Danger of
misdirected
piety.

“ If any of these entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go after other Gods, thou shalt not hearken unto him.” And those who speak in the name of Jehovah, saying, “ Thus saith the Lord ; when the Lord hath not spoken,” are no more exempt from the guilt of enticing to idolatry, than the worshippers of Baal.

The more disposed any one is to submissive veneration, the greater the importance of guarding him against misdirected veneration ;—against false piety ; against reverencing as divine, what in reality is human. And the more awfully important any question is, the greater is the call for a rigid investigation of what may be urged on both sides ; that the decision may be made on sound, rational, and scriptural grounds, and not according to the dictates of excited feelings and imagination.

Use of terms opposite to the things designated. And in these times especially, and in respect of this subject, men need to be warned against a mistake which at all times is not uncommon ;—that of allowing themselves to be misled by names and professions, which are often—apparently by designed choice,—the most opposite to the things really intended. Thus, for instance, the term “ Apostolical” is perpetually in the mouths of some who the most completely set at nought the principles which the Apostles have laid

down for our guidance in the inspired writings ; and who virtually nullify these by blending with them the traditions of uninspired men. The evils of "schism" again, are especially dwelt on by some who maintain principles the tendency of which has been shown to be to generate and perpetuate schism. To satisfy and "settle men's minds," is the profession of some whose principles lead (as has been above remarked) in proportion as each man has the most tender conscience, and the greatest anxiety about religious truth, to perplex and torment him with incurable doubts and scruples. "Church-principles" is a favorite phrase with some who are, in fact, lowering the just dignity and impairing the divinely-conferred rights of a Church. And none more loudly profess devoted and submissive admiration for the Anglican Church, than many of those who are emphatically opposed, in some of the most important points, to the principles on which our Reformers proceeded, and the spirit which actuated them throughout.

If any one is deliberately convinced that those their fundamental principles are erroneous, and that they rested the doctrines and institutions of our Church on a wrong basis, he deserves credit at least for honest consistency in leaving its communion.

Principles
 of the An-
 glican Re-
 formers.

§ 43. But to me it does appear, that
 —without attributing to them an infal-
 libility which they expressly disclaim
 —we may justly give our Reformers credit for
 such sound views, and such resolute adherence
 to evangelical truth, combined with such mode-
 ration and discretion, as were—considering the
 difficult circumstances they were placed in,—
 truly wonderful ; and such as are, in all times,
 and not least in the present, well worthy of imi-
 tation. It was their “wisdom to keep the
 mean” (as is expressed in the preface to the
 Book of Common Prayer) “between the two
 extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and
 too much easiness in admitting, any variation.”
 It was their wisdom also to “keep the mean”
 between the claims—never conflicting, except
 when misunderstood—of Scripture and of a
 Church. It was their wisdom to keep the mean
 between a slavish bondage to ancient prece-
 dents on the one hand, and a wanton and arro-
 gant disregard of them, on the other. It was
 their wisdom—their pious and Christian wis-
 dom—to keep the mean between rash and un-
 charitable judgment of other Churches, and
 equally rash carelessness, or fondness for inno-
 vation, in the regulations of their own. They
 conformed as closely as, in their judgment, cir-
 cumstances would warrant, to the examples of
 the earliest Churches, without for an instant

abandoning the rightful claims of their own, and without arrogantly pronouncing censure on those whose circumstances had led *them* to depart farther from those ancient precedents. Their “Faith” they drew from the Scriptures; their “Hope” they based on the Scriptures; their “Charity” they learned from the Scriptures.

A member of the Anglican Church,—I mean, a sincere and thoroughly consistent member of it—ought to feel a full conviction—and surely there are good grounds for that conviction,—both that the reforms they introduced were no more than were loudly called for by a regard for Gospel-truth, and that the Church as constituted by them, does possess, in its regulations and its officers, “Apostolical succession,” in the sense in which it is essential that a Christian Community *should* possess it; viz.:—in being a regularly-constituted Christian Society, framed in accordance with the fundamental principles taught us by the Apostles and their great Master.

Successors, in the Apostolic office, Successors of the Apostles. the Apostles have none. As *witnesses* of the *Resurrection*,—as *Dispensers* of *miraculous* gifts,—as inspired *Oracles* of divine *Revelation*,—they have no successors. But as *Members*,—as *Ministers*,—as *Governors*—of Christian Commu-

nities, their successors are the regularly-admitted Members,—the lawfully-ordained Ministers,—the regular and recognised Governors,—of a regularly-subsisting Christian Church; especially of a Church which conforming in fundamentals,—as I am persuaded ours does,—to Gospel-principles, claims and exercises no rights beyond those which have the clear sanction of our great Master, as being essentially implied in the very character of a Community.

May the members of a Church which our Reformers cleansed of so much corruption, and placed on its true basis, have the grace to profit by their example, and follow out their fundamental principles; labouring to be apostolical “not in mere words and names” but in deed and truth; actuated by the same spirit which was found in those great and good men, so far as they decreed what is agreeable to God’s word, and to the “pure and peaceable wisdom that is from above.” And especially may all who profess Church-principles be careful to guard themselves and others against the two most prevailing errors of these days;—the two kinds of encroachments on the legitimate rights of a Church; on the one side by presumptuous and self-sufficient irregularities, and defiance of lawful authority; and by the pretensions of supposed “Antiquity” and “Tradition,” on the

other ; that they may be enabled, under the divine blessing, to carry into effect more and more fully, and to bring to completion “all the holy desires, all the good counsels, and all the just works” of our Reformers, and of all other our predecessors, as many as have endeavoured, in simplicity and truth, to conform to the instructions of our divine Master and his Apostles.

APPENDIX.



APPENDIX.

NOTE (A.) Pp. 40, 42.

I HAVE said, "*secular empire*" and a "monopoly of *civil* privileges and powers," because the rule does not apply to such as are purely *ecclesiastical*. The government of the *Church* (except as far as relates to temporalities, which are clearly the property of the Nation) *ought* to be monopolized by members of that Church. It is an unseemly, and in many respects, mischievous, anomaly, that, in purely religious matters, any authority should be possessed (as is the case in this country) by those who are not members of the Religious Community. [See "Appeal on behalf of Church-government," a valuable and well-written pamphlet. Houlston and Co.]

It is true that the *greatest* evils that *might* arise from such an anomaly,—vexatious and oppressive interference in matters that affect the conscience—do *not* arise in this country. No greater evil does result in practice than that (no small one however) of leaving the Church virtually *without any* legislative Government. But even if this were a less evil than it is, it would not be the less true as a principle, that none ought to have any share in the government (except—as I have said—in respect of secular matters) of a Church, who are not members of it.

There are some however, who, from want of the habit of attentive reflection, are with difficulty brought to perceive the unsoundness of any false principle, except when it is fully developed in practice, and produces, *actually, all* the ill effects that it can consistently lead to. They cannot perceive which way a wind is blowing unless it blows a perfect gale. They not merely know a tree only by its fruits, but, except when it is actually bearing its fruits, and when it has brought them to the full perfection of poisonous maturity, they do not recognise the tree.

This defect may often be observed in men's judgments on another point also,—the employment of secular coercion in religious matters, with a view either to compel men to conform to the faith and mode of worship prescribed by the Civil-government, or to give more or less of political ascendancy, and monopoly of civil rights and power, to those of a particular persuasion. To burn Dissenters under the title of heretics,—or to put them to a less cruel death,—or to banish, or fine and imprison them,—or to exclude from all, or from some, of the rights of citizens, and reduce, more or less, to the condition of vassals or Helots, those who do not profess the religion which the State, as such, enjoins,—these are widely different indeed, in respect of the *actual amount* of evil inflicted, or of good denied to individuals ; but the *principle* is in all these cases, the same ; viz : the assumed right of the Secular Government, as such, to interfere with men's conscience and consequently (when the Government calls itself Christian) to make Christ's kingdom, so far, “a kingdom of this world.”

NOTE (B.) P. 66.

“THAT no society can exist without some rules, and without some means of enforcing obedience to those rules, is obvious. When therefore it is asked, whether Christ or

the Holy Spirit left any ecclesiastical laws, or vested any where power to enforce those laws ? if the question is put with a view to ascertain whether Church-government be of divine origin, it is idle ; inasmuch as the very institution of the ecclesiastical society, the Church, implies the design that rules should be established, and means provided to enforce them.

“ But another object may be intended by the question. It may be put with the view of ascertaining what those rules are, whereby this society, the Church, is designed to be governed. For, it may be said, and plausibly enough, that granting the intention of the Church’s Founder to have laws established to be ever so apparent, how are we to know *what kind of government* he intended ?

“ On one point the inquirer must satisfy himself. If, from the nature of the Church, and from existing circumstances, the members were already possessed of the means of acquiring this knowledge, in that case neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit would be likely to leave any code of ecclesiastical laws ; on precisely the same principle, as no code of ethics was left.

“ Now, is there any thing in the nature of the Church to guide us, as to what are ecclesiastical offences ? Undoubtedly there is. In every society there must be such a principle ; and by reference to it in each, are formed laws for the government of each. Every society recognises peculiar offences, arising out of, and depending solely on, the peculiar nature of the society ; so that, in proportion as this latter is understood, the former are defined. Much mischievous confusion in some instances arises from a want of attention to this connexion ; and the attention is frequently diverted from it by the accidental circumstance, that the same act often becomes an offence against many societies. Thus, theft is at once an offence against the supreme Ruler of the universe,—against the political body to which the thief is attached,—against some certain class of society, perhaps, in which he moves, and so on. The

act being one, it is only by reflection that we are enabled to separate the different views which render it in each case an offence, and in each of a different magnitude. Again, what becomes a crime because violating the principle of one society, may be none in another ; if, namely, it does not interfere with the object proposed in the formation and preservation of that other society. Thus, the violation of the academical rules of our Universities does not render the offending member amenable to the laws of the land. Thus, too, the very conduct which recommends a smuggler or a robber to his confederacy, becomes an offence against the political body with which he is associated.

“ In order, therefore, to ascertain what are inherent offences or crimes in any society, it is necessary that we should know with what object or objects such society is formed. If information of this kind then be found in the sacred record, respecting the Christian society, ecclesiastical law by revelation was no more to be expected, than a code of ethics to tell men what their own consciences were already constituted by God to declare.

“ It is certain, however, that if the question need not be answered in the affirmative, in order either to establish the divine origin of ecclesiastical government, or to determine what offences come under its cognizance, there is yet a third object which may be proposed in urging it. What *punishments* are authorized, in order to check those offences ? Ought not these to have been specified ? and, not having been specified, does the nature of the case here also supersede the necessity of a revelation, and enable us to know what coercion is, and what is not, agreeable to the Divine will ? The inquiry, too, seems to be the more reasonable, because in looking to the methods by which various societies are upheld, we find the punishment even in similar societies by no means the same. Military discipline, for instance, in different countries, and at different periods, has been enforced by penalties unlike in degree and in kind. In different countries and ages, the social tie

between the master and the slave has been differently maintained. All this is true, but still, in looking at the question so, we take only a partial view, and lose one important feature in the establishment of coercion,—the right.

“Now, this right is either inherent in the society, or conventional, or both, as is the case in most confederate bodies. When the right is limited to what the society exercises as inherent and indispensable,—inherent in its nature, and indispensable to its existence,—the extreme punishment is, *exclusion*; and the various degrees and modifications of punishment, are only degrees and modifications of exclusion. When the right is conventional also, (as far as it is so,) the punishment is determined by arbitrary enactment, proceeding from some authority acknowledged by all parties, (whether that authority be lodged in the parties themselves, or in competent representatives, or in other delegated persons,) and therefore styled conventional. Few societies have ever existed without a large portion of these latter. Hence the anomaly above alluded to, and hence too the vulgar impression, that all punishments are arbitrary, and depend solely on the caprice and judgment of the government. What is popularly and emphatically termed *society*, affords a good instance of the first; that is, of a social union regulated and maintained only by a right inherent. In this, excessive ill-manners and the gross display of ungentlemanly feelings are punished by absolute exclusion. According as the offence is less, the party offending is for a time excluded from some select *portion* of good society, or from certain meetings and the like, in which more particularly the spirit and genuine character of gentility are to be cherished. All its lawful and appropriate punishments are a system of exclusion, in various shapes and degrees.”—*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, (Historical Division,) vol. ii. pp. 744, 745.

NOTE (C.) Pp. 68, 84.

“HEREUPON doth the Apostle lay a divine directory before him, concerning their manner of praying, choosing and ordaining of ministers, approving deacons, admitting widows, and regulating the people—that nothing could be wanting to the healthful temper of that church, if they receive and embrace these applications; in the most of which prescriptions, he useth exceeding much of their synagogue-language, that he may be the better understood; and reflecteth upon divers of their own laws and customs, that what he prescribeth, may imprint upon them with the more conviction. He calleth the minister ‘Episcopus,’ from the common and known title ‘the chazan’ or ‘overseer’ in the synagogue: he prescribeth rules and qualifications for his choice, in most things suitable to their own cautions in choosing of an elder: he speaketh of ‘elders ruling only, and elders ruling and labouring in the word and doctrine;’ meaning, in this distinction, that same that he had spoken of in chap. iii. ‘bishops and deacons.’ Both these, in the common language, then best known, were called, ‘elders,’ and both owned as ‘rulers.’ Yea, the very title, that they usually termed, ‘deacons,’ (Parnasin,) was the common word that was used to signify, ‘a ruler.’ The Jerusalem Talmud, speaking of the three ‘Parnasin,’ or ‘deacons,’ that were in every synagogue, hath these two passages, which may be some illustration to two passages in this epistle:—‘They appoint not less than three Parnasin in the congregation: for if matters of money were judged by three, matters of life much more require three to manage them.’ Observe, that the deacon’s office was accounted as an office that concerned life; namely, in taking care for the existence of the poor. According to this, may that in chap. iii. 12, be understood: ‘For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree;’ a good degree towards being entrusted with souls, when they have been faithful in the discharge of their trust

concerning the life of the body.—*Lightfoot's Harmony of the New Testament. Edited by the Rev. John Pitman. Vol. iii. p. 257.*

“The Apostles at Jerusalem, hearing the glad tidings of the conversion of Samaria, send down Peter and John ; and why these two rather than any other of the twelve, is not so easy to resolve, as it is ready to observe, that if, in this employment, there was any sign of primacy, John was sharer of it as well as Peter. Being come, they pray and lay their hands upon them, and they receive the Holy Ghost. Here episcopacy thinketh it hath an undeniable argument for proof of its hierarchy, and of the strange rite of confirmation. For thus pleadeth Baronius for the former : ‘From hence (saith he) it may be seen, that the hierarchicall order was instituted in the church of God, even in this time ; for Philip doth so baptize those that believe, that yet he usurpeth not the apostolical privilege,—namely, the imposition of hands granted to the Apostles.’ And thus the Rhemists both for it, and for the latter, in their notes on Acts viii. 17. :—‘If this Philip had been an Apostle (saith St. Bede,) he might have imposed his hands, that they might have received the Holy Ghost : but this none can do, saving bishops. For though priests may baptize and anoint the baptized also with chrism consecrated by a bishop,—yet can he not sign his forehead with the same holy oil ; because that belongeth only to bishops, when they give the Holy Ghost to be baptized.’ And after this testimony of Bede, they subjoin their inference : ‘This imposition therefore of hands, together with the prayers here specified (which no doubt was the very same that the church useth to that purpose) was the ministration of the sacrament of confirmation.’

“Now, let the reader, with indifferency and seriousness, but ruminate upon these two queries, and then judge of these two inferences :—

“First, whether apostleship were not an order for ever,

inimitable in the church : for besides the reason given to prove that it was, upon the choosing of Matthias, others may be added to make it more clear :—as, 1. The end of their election was peculiar, the like to which was not to be in the church again ; for they were chosen to be with Christ, Mark iii. 14 ; to be eye-witnesses of his resurrection, Acts i. 22, ii. 32, and x. 41 ; as they had been of his actions and passion, Luke i. 2. And, therefore, Paul pleading for his apostleship, that “ he had seen the Lord,” 1 Cor. ix. 1 ; and in the relation or story of his calling, this particular is singularly added, that “ he saw that Just One, and heard the voice of his mouth,” Acts xxii. 14.

“ Secondly, the name of ‘ Apostles ’ keepeth itself unmixed or confounded with any other order. It is true, indeed, that the significancy of the word would agree to other ministers that are to preach ; but there is a peculiar propriety in the sense, that hath confined the title to the twelve and Paul : as any indifferent eye will judge and censure upon the weighing of it in the New Testament.

“ Thirdly, when Paul reckoneth the several kinds of ministry, that Christ Jesus left in the church at his ascension, Eph. iv. 11, and 1 Cor. xii. 28,—there is none that can think them all to be perpetuated, or that they should continue successively in the like order from time to time. For within a hundred years after our Saviour’s birth, where were either prophets or evangelists, miracles or healings ? And if these extraordinary kinds of ministration were ordained but for a time, and for special occasion, and were not to be imitated in the church unto succeeding times ; much more, or at the least as much, were the Apostles, and order much more, at least, as much extraordinary, as they.

“ Fourthly, the constant and undeniable parallel, which is made betwixt the twelve Patriarchs, the fathers of the twelve tribes, and the twelve Apostles, not only by the number itself, but also by the New Testament, in the four-and-twenty Elders, Rev. iv. 4,—and in the gates and foundations of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 12, 14,—doth

argue and prove the latter order as inimitable as the first. These things well considered, if there were no more, it will show, how improbable and unconsonant the first inference is, that is alleged, that because there was a subordination betwixt the apostles and Philip, therefore, the like is to be reputed betwixt bishops and other ministers, and that bishops in the church are in the place of the Apostles.” —*Lightfoot’s Commentary on the Acts*, vol. viii. p. 125.

“1. Here beginneth ‘the kingdom of heaven;’ when the Gentiles are received to favour and to the Gospel, who had been so long cast off, and lain in ignorance and idolatry; and when no difference is made betwixt them and the Jews any longer,—but, of every nation, they that fear God and work righteousness are accepted of him, as well as Israel. This is the very first beginning or dawning to the kingdom of heaven; and so it grew on more and more, till Jerusalem was destroyed; and then was the perfect day, when the Gentiles only were become the church of Christ; and no church or commonwealth of Israel to be had at all, but they destroyed and ruined.

“2. Here ‘Peter hath the keys of the kingdom,’ and unlocked the door for the Gentiles to come in to the faith and gospel, which, till now, had been shut, and they kept out. And Peter only had the keys, and none of the apostles or disciples but he, for though they from henceforward brought in Gentiles daily into the kingdom of heaven, by converting them to the Gospel,—yet it was he that first and only opened the door; and the door, being once opened, was never shut, nor never shall be to the end of the world. And this was all the priority that Peter had before the other apostles, if it were any priority; and how little this concerneth Rome, or the Papacy, as to be any foundation of it, a child may observe.

“3. Peter here looseth the greatest strictness, and what was the straitest bound-up of any thing that was in all the policy of Moses and customs of the Jews,—and that was,

the difference of clean and unclean, in the legal sense. And this he looseth on earth, and it is loosed in heaven ; for from heaven had he an immediate warrant to dissolve it. And this he doth, first declaratively, showing that nothing henceforward is to be called common or unclean, and showing his authority for this doctrine ; and then practically conforming himself to this doctrine that he taught, by going in unto the uncircumcised, and eating with them. ‘Binding and loosing,’ in our Saviour’s sense, and in the Jew’s sense, from whose use he taketh the phrase, is ‘of things and not of persons ;’ for Christ saith to Peter, $\delta \epsilon \acute{\alpha} \nu \delta \eta \sigma \eta \varsigma$, and $\delta \epsilon \acute{\alpha} \nu \lambda \acute{\upsilon} \sigma \eta \varsigma$; δ and not $\delta \nu$; ‘whatsoever’ thou bindest, and not ‘whomsoever ;’ and to the other apostles, $\theta \sigma \alpha \epsilon \acute{\alpha} \nu \delta \eta \sigma \eta \tau \epsilon$, Matt. xviii. 18, $\theta \sigma \alpha$ and not $\theta \sigma \sigma \upsilon \varsigma$, ‘whatsoever *things*,’ and not, ‘whatsoever *persons* ;’ so that, though it be true and indeed, that Jews and Gentiles are loosed henceforward one to the communion of another,—yet the proper object of this loosing, that is loosed by Peter, was that law or doctrine that tied them up. And so concerning the eating of those things that had been prohibited,—it is true, indeed, that the Jews were let loose henceforward to the use of them in diet, and to eat what they thought good ; but this loosing was not so properly of the men, as the loosing of that prohibition, that had bound them before. And this could be no way but doctrinally, by teaching that christian liberty that was given by the gospel.

“Now, though Peter only, and none but he, had ‘the keys of the kingdom’ of heaven, yet had all the apostles the ‘power of binding and loosing,’ as well as he ; and so have all the ministers of the gospel as well as they ; and all in the same sense, namely, doctrinally to teach what is bound and loose, or lawful and unlawful ; but not in the same kind : for the apostles, having the constant and unerring assistance of the Holy Ghost, did nullify, by their doctrine, some part of Moses’s law, as to the use of it, as

circumcision, sacrifices, purifyings, and other legal rites,—which could not have been done by men, that had not had such a Spirit ; for there must be the same Spirit of prophecy to abrogate a law which had set it in force.”—P. 219.

“ Besides these there was ‘ the public minister of the synagogue,’ who prayed publicly, and took care about the reading of the law, and sometimes preached, if there were not some other to discharge this office. This person was called, ‘ The Angel of the Church,’ and ‘ the Chazan or Bishop of the Congregation.’ The public minister of the synagogue himself read not the law publicly ; but, every sabbath, he called out seven of the synagogue (on other days, fewer) whom he judged fit to read. He stood by him that read, with great care observing, that he read nothing either falsely, or improperly,—and calling him back, and correcting him, if he had failed in any thing. And hence he was called ‘ *Ἐπίσκοπος*,’ or ‘ Overseer.’ Certainly, the signification of the word ‘ Bishop,’ and ‘ Angel of the Church,’ had been determined with less noise, if recourse had been made to the proper fountains,—and men had not vainly disputed about the signification of words, taken I know not whence. The service and worship of the temple being abolished, as being ceremonial, God transplanted the worship and public adoration of God used in the synagogues, which was moral, into the Christian church ; to wit, the public ministry, public prayers, reading God’s word, and preaching, &c. Hence the names of the ministers of the gospel were the very same, ‘ The Angel of the Church,’ and ‘ The Bishop,’—which belonged to the ministers in the synagogues.”—*Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark*, vol. xi. p. 88.

“ Ver. 19: Καὶ δώσω σοι τὰς κλεῖς τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν. ‘ And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’ That is, ‘ Thou shalt first open the door

of faith to the Gentiles.' He had said, that he would build his church to endure for ever, against which 'the gates of hell should not prevail,' which had prevailed against the Jewish church; and 'To thee, O Peter (saith he) I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; that thou mayest open a door for the bringing in of the gospel to that church.' Which was performed by Peter in that remarkable story concerning Cornelius, Acts x. And I make no doubt, that those words of Peter respect these words of Christ, Acts xv. 7; 'Ἀφ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν ἐξελέξατο διὰ τοῦ στόματός μου ἀκοῦσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὸν λόγον τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, καὶ πιστεῦσαι. 'A good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel by my mouth, and believe.'

"Καὶ ὃ ἐὰν δέσῃς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, &c. 'And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth,' &c. Καὶ ὃ ἐὰν λύσῃς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, &c. 'And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth,' &c.

"I. We believe the keys were committed to Peter alone, but the power of binding and loosing to the other apostles also, chap. xxviii. 18.

"II. It is necessary to suppose, that Christ here spake according to the common people,—or he could not be understood without a particular commentary, which is nowhere to be found.

"III. But now 'to bind and loose,' a very usual phrase in the Jewish schools, was spoken of things, not of persons; which is here also to be observed in the articles, ὅ and ὅσα, 'what,' and 'whatsoever,' chap. xviii."—*Lightfoot*, p. 226.

NOTE (D.) Pp. 82, 83.

"It was indeed not at all to be expected that the Gospels, the Acts, and those Epistles which have come down to us, should have been, considering the circumstances in which

they were written, any thing different from what they are : but the question still recurs, why should not the Apostles or their followers have also committed to paper, what we are sure must have been perpetually in their mouths, regular instruction to Catechumens, Articles of Faith, Prayers, and directions as to Public Worship, and administration of the Sacraments ?

“Supposing that the other avocations of the Apostles would not allow any of *them* leisure for such compositions,—though we know that some of them did find time for writing, two of them, not a little,—even this supposition does not at all explain the difficulty ; for the Acts, and two of the Gospels, were written by men who were only attendants on the Apostles. Nor would such writings as I am speaking of have required an *inspired* penman ; only, one who had *access* to persons thus gifted. We know with what care the Apostolic Epistles were preserved, first by the Churches to which they were respectively sent, and afterwards, by the others also, as soon as they received copies. How comes it then that no one of the Elders (Presbyters) of any of these Churches should have written down, and afterwards submitted to the revision of an Apostle, that outline of catechetical instruction—that elementary introduction to the Christian faith—which they must have received at first from that Apostle’s mouth, and have afterwards employed in the instruction of their own converts ? Why did none of them record any of the Prayers, of which they must have heard so many from an Apostle’s mouth, both in the ordinary devotional assemblies, in the administration of the Sacraments, and in the “laying on of hands.” by which they themselves had been ordained ?

“Paul, after having given the most general exhortations to the Corinthians for the preservation of decent regularity in their religious meetings, adds, ‘the rest will I set in order when I come.’ And so doubtless he did ; and so he must have done, by verbal directions, in all the other churches also ; is it not strange then that these verbal di-

rections should nowhere have been committed to writing ? This would have seemed a most obvious and effectual mode of precluding all future disorders and disputes : as also the drawing up of a compendious statement of Christian doctrines, would have seemed a safeguard against the still more important evil of heretical error. Yet if any such statements and formularies *had* been drawn up, with the sanction, and under the revision of an Apostle, we may be sure they would have been preserved and transmitted to posterity, with the most scrupulous and reverential care. The conclusion therefore seems inevitable, that either no one of the numerous Elders and Catechists ever thought of doing this, or else, that they were forbidden by the Apostles to execute any such design ; and each of these alternatives seems to me alike inexplicable by natural causes.

“For it should be remembered that, when other points are equal, it is much more difficult to explain a *negative* than a *positive* circumstance in our Scriptures. There is something, suppose, in the New Testament, which the first promulgators of Christianity,—considered as mere unassisted men,—were not likely to write ; and there is something else, which they were, we will suppose, equally unlikely to omit writing : now these two difficulties are by no means equal. For, with respect to the former, if we can make out that *any one* of these men might have been, by nature or by circumstances, qualified and induced to write it, the phenomenon is solved. To point out even a single individual able and likely to write it, would account for its being written. But it is not so with respect to the other case, that of omission. Here, we have to *prove a negative* ;—to show, not merely that this or that man was likely not to write what we find omitted, but, that *no one* was likely to write it.” * * * *

“Although however we cannot pretend, in every case, to perceive the reasons for what God has appointed, it is not in the present case difficult to discern the superhuman

wisdom of the course adopted. If the Hymns and forms of Prayer,—the Catechisms,—the Confessions of faith,—and the Ecclesiastical regulations, which the Apostles employed, had been recorded, these would all have been regarded as parts of *Scripture*: and even had they been accompanied by the most express declarations of the lawfulness of altering or laying aside any of them, we cannot doubt that they would have been in practice most scrupulously retained, even when changes of manners, tastes, and local and temporary circumstances of every kind, rendered them no longer the most suitable. The Jewish ritual, designed for one Nation and Country, and intended to be of temporary duration, was fixed and accurately prescribed: the same Divine Wisdom from which both dispensations proceeded, having designed Christianity for all Nations and Ages, left Christians at large in respect of those points in which variation might be desirable. But I think no *human* wisdom would have foreseen and provided for this. That a number of *Jews*, accustomed from their infancy to so strict a ritual, should, in introducing Christianity as the second part of the same dispensation, have abstained not only from accurately prescribing for the use of all Christian Churches for ever, the mode of divine worship, but even from recording what was actually in use under their own directions, does seem to me utterly incredible, unless we suppose them to have been restrained from doing this by a special admonition of the Divine Spirit.

“And we may be sure, as I have said, that if they *had* recorded the particulars of their own worship, the very words they wrote would have been invested, in our minds, with so much sanctity, that it would have been thought presumptuous to vary or to omit them, however inappropriate they might become. The Lord’s Prayer, the only one of general application that is recorded in the Scriptures, though so framed as to be suitable in all Ages and Countries, has yet been subjected to much superstitious abuse.”

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“ Each Church, therefore, was left, through the wise foresight of Him who alone ‘knew what is in Man,’ to provide for its own wants as they should arise !—to steer its own course by the Chart and Compass which his holy Word supplies, regulating for itself the Sails and Rudder, according to the winds and currents it may meet with.

“ ‘ The Apostles had begun and established precedents, which, of course, would be naturally adopted by their uninspired successors. But still, as these were only the formal means of grace, and not the blessing itself, it was equally to be expected that the Church should assume a discretionary power, whenever the means established became impracticable or clearly unsuitable, and either substitute others, or even altogether abolish such as existed. . . . It might seem at first that the apostolical precedents were literally binding on all ages ; but this cannot have been intended ; and for this reason, that the greater portion of the apostolical practices have been transmitted to us, not on apostolical authority, but on the authority of the uninspired church : which was handed them down with an uncertain mixture of its own appointments. How are we to know the enactments of the inspired rulers from those of the uninspired ? and if there be no certain clue, we must either bring down the authority of apostolical usage to that of the uninspired church, or raise that of the uninspired church to that of the apostolical. Now the former is, doubtless, what was, to a certain extent, intended by the Apostles themselves, as will appear from a line of distinction by which they have carefully partitioned off such of their appointments as are designed to be perpetual, from such as are left to share the possibility of change, with the institutions of uninspired wisdom.

“ ‘ If then we look to the account of the Christian usages contained in Scripture, nothing can be more unquestionable, than that while some are specified, others are passed over in silence. It is not even left so as to make us imagine that those mentioned may be all : but while

some are noted specifically, the establishment of others is implied, without the particular mode of observance being given. Thus, we are equally sure from Scripture, that Christian ministers were ordained by a certain form, and that Christians assembled in prayer ; but while the precise process of laying on of hands is mentioned in the former institution, no account is given of the precise method of church service, or even of any regular forms of prayer, beyond the Lord's Prayer. Even the record of the Ordination Service itself admits of the same distinction. It is quite as certain that, in it, some prayer was used, as that some outward form accompanied the prayer ; but the form is specified, the prayer left unrecorded.

“ ‘ What now is the obvious interpretation of the holy Dispenser's meaning in this mode of record ? Clearly it is, that the Apostles regulated, under His guidance, the forms and practices of the church, so as was best calculated to convey grace to the church *at that time*. Nevertheless, part of its institutions were of a nature, which, although formal, would never require a change ; and these therefore were left recorded in the Scriptures, to mark this distinction of character. The others were not, indeed, to be capriciously abandoned, nor except when there should be manifest cause for so doing ; but, as such a case was supposable, these were left to mingle with the uninspired precedents ; the claims of which, as precedents, would be increased by this uncertain admixture, and the authority of the whole rendered so far binding, and so far subject to the discretion of the Church. They might not be altered unless sufficient grounds should appear ; but the settling of this point was left to the discretion of the church.’^a

“ The Apostles themselves, however, and their numerous fellow-labourers, would not, I think, have been, if left to themselves, so far-sighted as to perceive (all, and each of them, without a single exception) the expediency of this procedure. Most likely, many of them, but according to

^a Hinds's History, vol. ii. pp. 113—115.

all human probability, some of them, would have left us, as parts of Scripture, compositions such as I have been speaking of : and these, there can be no doubt, would have been scrupulously retained for ever. They would have left us Catechisms, which would have been like precise directions for the cultivation of some plant, admirably adapted to a particular soil and climate, but inapplicable in those of a contrary description : their Symbols would have stood like ancient sea-walls, built to repel the encroachments of the waves, and still scrupulously kept in repair, when perhaps the sea had retired from them many miles, and was encroaching on some different part of the coast.

“ There are multitudes, even as it is, who do not, even now, perceive the expediency of the omission ; there are not a few who even complain of it as a defect, or even make it a ground of objection. That in that day, the reasons for the procedure actually adopted, should have occurred, and occurred to *all* the first Christians, supposing them mere unassisted men, and men too brought up in Judaism, is utterly incredible.”—*Essay on Omissions*, pp. 15—19 ; 24—27 ; 30—34.

NOTE (E.) P. 99.

“ IT is not, I think, unlikely that some hasty and superficial reasoners may have found an objection to Christianity in the omission of which I have been speaking. It is certain that there are not a few who are accustomed to pronounce this or that supposition improbable, as soon as they perceive that it involves great difficulties ; without staying to examine whether there are more or fewer on the *other side* of the alternative : as if a traveller when he had the choice of two roads, should, immediately on perceiving that there were impediments in the one, decide on taking the other, before he had ascertained whether it were even

possible. I can conceive some such reasoners exclaiming, in the present case, ‘Surely, if the Apostles had really been inspired by an all-wise God, they would never have omitted so essential a provision as that of a clear systematic statement of the doctrines to be believed, and the worship to be offered, so as to cut off, as far as can be done, all occasions of heresy and schism. If the Deity had really bestowed a revelation on his creatures, He would have provided rules of faith and of practice so precise and so obvious, as not to be overlooked or mistaken ; instead of leaving men, whether pretending to infallibility, as the Romanists, or interpreting Scripture by the light of reason, as the Protestants, to elicit by a laborious search, and comparison of passages, what doctrines and duties are, in their judgment, agreeable to the Divine Will.’

“ You think it was to be expected (one might reply) that God would have proceeded in this manner ; and is it not at least as much to be expected *that Man would ?* It is very unlikely, you say, that the Apostles would have omitted these systematic instructions, if they had really been inspired : but if they were *not*, they must have been impostors or enthusiasts ; does then that hypothesis remove the difficulty ! Is it not at least as unlikely, on that supposition, that no one of them, or of their numerous followers, should have taken a step so natural and obvious ? All reasonable conjecture, and all experience show, that any men, but especially *Jews*, when engaged in the propagation and establishment of a religion, and acting, whether sincerely or insincerely, on their own judgment as to what was most expedient, would have done what no Christian writer during the age of (supposed) inspiration *has* done. One would even have expected indeed, that, as we have four distinct Gospels, so, several different writers would have left us copies of the Catechisms, &c., which they were in the habit of using orally. This or that individual might have been prevented from doing so by accidental circumstances ; but that every one of some hundreds should

have been so prevented, amounts to a complete moral impossibility.

“We have here, then, it may be said, a choice of difficulties: if the Christian religion came from God, it is (we will suppose) very strange, and contrary to all we should have expected from the Deity, that He should have permitted in the Scriptures the omission I am speaking of: if, again, it is the contrivance of men, it is strange, and contrary to all we could have expected from *men*, that *they* should have made the omission. And now, which do we know the more of, God, or Man? Of whose character and designs are we the more competent judges, and the better able to decide what may reasonably be expected of each, the Creator, or our fellow-creatures? And as there can be no doubt about the answer to this question, so, the conclusion which follows from that answer is obvious. If the alternative were presented to me, that either something has been done by persons with whose characters I am intimately acquainted, utterly at variance with their nature, and unaccountable, or else that some man to whom I am personally a stranger, (though after all, the nature of every human Being must be better known to us, than, by the light of reason, that of the Deity can be,) had done something which to me is entirely inexplicable, I should be thought void of sense if I did not embrace, as the less improbable, this latter side of the alternative.

“And such is the state of the present case, to one who finds this peculiarity in the Christian Scriptures quite unaccountable on either supposition. The argument is complete, whether we are able, or not, to perceive any wise reasons for the procedure adopted. Since no one of the first promulgators of Christianity did that which they must, some of them at least, have been *naturally* led to do, it follows that they must have been *supernaturally* withheld from it; how little soever we may be able even to conjecture the object of the prohibition. For in respect of this, and several other (humanly speaking, unaccountable) cir-

cumstances in our religion, especially that treated of in the Fourth of the Essays above referred to, it is important to observe, that the argument does not turn on the supposed *wisdom* of this or that appointment, which we conceive to be worthy of the Deity, and thence infer that the religion must have proceeded from Him: but, on the utter improbability of its *having proceeded from Man*; which leaves its divine origin the only alternative. The Christian Scriptures considered in this point of view, present to us a standing Miracle; at least, a Monument of a Miracle; since they are in several points such as we may be sure, according to all natural causes, they would *not* have been. Even though the character which these writings do in fact exhibit, be such as we cannot clearly account for on *any* hypothesis, still, if they are such as we can clearly perceive no false pretenders would have composed, the evidence is complete, though the difficulty may remain unexplained.”—*Essay on Omissions*, pp. 19—24.

NOTE (F.) P. 100.

“THE three great principles then, on which every Church, or Christian society, was formed by the apostles, were SPIRITUALITY, UNIVERSALITY, and UNITY. Out of these arose one important limit to the discretionary powers of the uninspired Church, when deprived of extraordinary authority. It is of the last importance that this fact should be borne in mind, in every appeal to the practice and authority of the primitive Church. There is (even among protestant divines) a vague method of citing the authority of the early Churches in matters of discipline and practice, without any distinct view of the exact weight of that authority. In quoting doctrinal statements we are generally more accurate in our estimate; but it is undeniable, that the practices and discipline of the primitive Churches,

are subject to the same kind of check from Scripture, as are their opinions and faith ; and are in no instance to be received as if they were matters left altogether to their discretion. The *principles*, although not the specific rules, are given in the New Testament : and this is, perhaps, nearly all that is done in the case of the doctrines themselves. Only the elements, out of which these are to be composed, are furnished by Scripture. So far from being stated in a formal way, some of the abstract terms for these doctrines are not found in the Scriptures ; such a statement and enunciation of them being left to the discretion of the Church. So, too, the principles of the Church-establishment were given, and were put in practice for illustration ; and the application of these principles was all that was left to the discretion of its uninspired rulers. In short, every Church, in all ages, holds Scripture in its hand, as its warrant for its usages as well as for its doctrines ; and had the immediate successors and companions of the apostles, from the very first, corrupted the government and constitution of the Church, *we* should be enabled to condemn them, from the New Testament ; and to this test it is the duty of all ages to bring them. Their management of those matters which are said to be left indeterminate, has only the authority of an experiment ; it is a practical illustration of Scriptural principles. Whenever they have been successful in this experiment, it would, indeed, generally be unwise and presumptuous in us to hazard a different mode of attaining the same result ; but even here, any deviation is authorized by difference of circumstances : the same principle which guided them being kept in view by us. But, in whatever stage of ecclesiastical history the principle itself has been forgotten,—it matters not how far back the practice may be traced,—it has no authority as a precedent. The Bible is our only attested rule ; and we must appeal to it with the boldness recommended by the apostle to his converts ; and though an angel from heaven

preach unto us any other rule than that we have received, let him be accursed.

“This boundary line to the discretionary powers of the Church would be quite clear, supposing the ecclesiastical principles to have been left only as above considered, in the form of abstract instruction, whether formally enunciated, or certainly deducible from the Scriptures. But far more than this was done. On these very principles the apostles actually formed and regulated societies of Christians; so as to leave them not merely abstractedly propounded, but practically proved. This proceeding, while it lightened the difficulty of the uninspired Church, (especially of those who first received the guidance of it from the apostles, and who most needed it,) proportionably contracted the discretionary powers with which they were invested. If only abstract principles had been left, uninspired authorities would have been justified in regarding solely these, and regulating the means of conformity to them by their own unbiassed judgment. But the apostolical precedents created a new restriction. Rulers of infallible judgment had not only taught the principle, but the precise method by which that principle was best preserved had been practised by them, and set forth, apparently for the guidance of their less enlightened successors.

“Was the Church of all ages bound to follow their track without any deviation? If so, where was any room for discretionary power? If not, on what authority was the deviation to be made, and how far was it authorized? Here the most accurate view of the character and object of the Christian’s sacred record is necessary, in order to remove all obscurity from the question. That record, as far as the agency of human ministers is its object, is partly historical, partly legislative. The two terms are not, perhaps, quite expressive of the distinction intended; but, by Scripture being partly legislative, is meant, that it is partly concerned in conveying the rules and principles of religion—the revealed will, in short, of God. It is also partly historical;

and of the historical portion no inconsiderable share is solely or principally a practical illustration of these rules. History and legislation are indeed both blended ; and it is because they are thus connected : but the respective uses of them, as distinct portions of Scripture, are here, as in other questions of a similar nature, very important. When the historical incidents, the *facts* recorded, are recorded as specimens of the fulfilment of God's will, their only authority, as precedents and examples, arises from their conformity to the principle which they illustrate. Now it is conceivable and likely, that a change of circumstances may render a practice inconsistent with such a principle, which originally was most accordant with it, and *vice versâ*. The principle is the fixed point, and the course which has first attained it may become as unsuitable to another who pursues it, as the same line of direction would be for two voyagers who should be steering for the same landmark at different seasons, and with different winds. Still, as in this latter case, the first successful attempt would be, to a certain extent, a guide to those which follow ; and this, exactly in proportion to the skill of the forerunner. The apostles were known to be infallible guides ; and those who immediately succeeded them, and all subsequent ages, are quite sure that they must have pursued that which was, under the existing circumstances, the most direct line to their object,—that, situated as Christianity was in their hands, all their regulations were the best possible for preserving the principles of the Church-establishment and government. The uninspired Church was therefore bound to follow them, until any apostolical practice should be found inadequate to accomplish its original purpose. Here commence the discretion and responsibility ; the first obligation being to maintain the principle according to the best of their judgment, as the prudent steersman alters his track and deviates from the course marked out in his chart, when wind or tide compel him to the deviation.

“ And thus we shall be at no loss for the precise differ-

ence of authority between the precedents of the apostolical and of the primitive uninspired Church. In matters which admit of appeal to the usage of the apostolical Church, we are sure, not only that the measure was wise, but the very wisest ; and, accordingly, the only question is, whether its suitableness has been affected by any change of circumstances. On the other hand, in a similar reference to the uninspired Church of any age, the measure is first of all pronounced wise or unwise—lawful or unlawful, as it conduces or not to the maintenance of the revealed principles of ecclesiastical society. And, supposing the measure under consideration be proved to have been so conducive, still it is not at once certain, as in the former case, that it was the wisest and most judicious measure which the existing circumstances required or admitted. It emanated from fallible wisdom. Accordingly, in canvassing the authority of such a precedent, we are authorized and bound to institute two inquiries ;—Was the measure the most accordant with ecclesiastical principles *then* ? Is it so *now* ? Whereas, in the former appeal to apostolic usage, the only question is, whether it is convenient *now* ?” —*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, (Historical Division,) vol. ii. pp. 775, 776.

NOTE (G.) P. 115.

“SUPPOSING such a summary of Gospel-truths had been drawn up, and could have been contrived with such exquisite skill as to be sufficient and well adapted for all, of every age and country, what would have been the probable result ? It would have commanded the unhesitating assent of all Christians, who would, with deep veneration, have stored up the very words of it in their memory, without any need of laboriously searching the rest of the Scriptures,

to ascertain its agreement with them ; which is what we do (at least are evidently *called on* to do) with a *human* exposition of the faith ; and the absence of this labour, together with the tranquil security as to the correctness of their belief which would have been thus generated, would have ended in a careless and contented apathy. There would have been no room for doubt,—no call for vigilant attention in the investigation of truth,—none of that effort of mind which is now requisite, in comparing one passage with another, and collecting instruction from the scattered, oblique, and incidental references to various doctrines in the existing Scriptures ; and, in consequence, none of that excitement of the best feelings, and that improvement of the heart, which are the natural, and doubtless the designed result of an humble, diligent, and sincere study of the Christian Scriptures.

“ In fact, all study, properly so called, of the rest of Scripture,—all lively interest in its perusal,—would have been nearly superseded by such an inspired compendium of doctrine ; to which alone, as far the most convenient for that purpose, habitual reference would have been made, in any questions that might arise. Both would have been regarded, indeed, as of divine authority ; but the Compendium, as the fused and purified metal ; the other, as the mine containing the crude ore. And the Compendium itself, being not, like the existing Scriptures, that *from which* the faith is to be learned, but *the very thing to be learned*, would have come to be regarded by most with an indolent, unthinking veneration, which would have exercised little or no influence on the character. Their orthodoxy would have been, as it were, petrified, like the bodies of those animals we read of incrustated in the ice of the polar regions ; firm-fixed, indeed, and preserved unchangeable, but cold, motionless, lifeless. It is only when our energies are roused, and our faculties exercised, and our attention kept awake, by an ardent pursuit of truth, and anxious watchfulness against error,—when, in short, we

feel ourselves to be doing something towards acquiring, or retaining, or improving our knowledge,—it is then only, that that knowledge makes the requisite practical impression on the heart and on the conduct.”—*Essay on Omisions*, pp. 34—37.

NOTE (H.) P. 140.

“SOME one may perhaps ask you, how you can know, except by taking the word of the learned for it, that there *are* these Greek and Hebrew originals which have been handed down from ancient times? or how you can be sure that our translations of them are faithful, except by trusting to the translators? So that an unlearned Christian must, after all, (some people will tell you,) be at the mercy of the learned, in what relates to the very foundations of his faith. He must take their word (it will be said) for the very existence of the Bible in the original languages, and for the meaning of what is written in it; and, therefore, he may as well at once take their word for every thing, and believe in his religion on their assurance.

“And this is what many persons do. But others will be apt to say, ‘How can we tell that the learned have not deceived us? The Mohammedans take the word of the learned men among them; and the Pagans do the same; and if the people have been imposed upon by their teachers in Mohammedan and Pagan countries, how can we tell that it is not the same in Christian countries? What ground have we for trusting with such perfect confidence in our Christian teachers, that they are men who would not deceive us?’

“The truth is, however, that an unlearned Christian may have very good grounds for being a believer, without placing this entire confidence in any man. He may have reason to believe that there are ancient Greek manuscripts

of the New Testament, though he never saw one, nor could read it if he did. And he may be convinced that an English Bible gives the meaning of the original, though he may not trust completely to any one's word. In fact, he may have the same sort of evidence in this case, which every one trusts to in many other cases, where none but a madman would have any doubt at all.

“For instance, there is no one tolerably educated who does not know that there is such a country as France, though he may have never been there himself. Who is there that doubts whether there are such cities as London, and Paris, and Rome, though he may have never visited them? Most people are fully convinced that the world is round, though there are but few who have sailed round it. There are many persons living in the inland parts of these islands who never saw the sea; and yet none of them, even the most ignorant clowns, have any doubt that there is such a thing as the sea. We believe all these, and many other such things, because we have been told them.

“Now suppose any one should say, ‘How do you know that travellers have not imposed upon you in all these matters; as it is well known travellers are apt to do? Is there any traveller you can so fully trust in, as to be quite sure he would not deceive you?’ What would you answer? I suppose you would say, *one* traveller might, perhaps, deceive us; or even two or three might possibly combine to propagate a false story, in some case where hardly any one would have the opportunity to detect them; but in these matters there are hundreds and thousands who would be sure to contradict the accounts if they were not true; and travellers are often glad of an opportunity of detecting each other's mistakes. Many of them disagree with each other in several particulars respecting the cities of Paris and Rome; and if it had been false that there are any such cities at all, it is impossible but that the falsehood should have been speedily contradicted. And it is the same with

the existence of the sea,—the roundness of the world,—and the other things that were mentioned.

“It is in the same manner that we believe, on the word of astronomers, that the earth turns round every twenty-four hours, though we are insensible of the motion; and that the sun, which seems as if you could cover it with your hat, is immensely larger than the earth we inhabit; though there is not one person in ten thousand that has ever gone through the mathematical proof of this. And yet we have very good reason for believing it; not from any strong confidence in the honesty of any particular astronomer, but because the same things are attested by many different astronomers; who are so far from combining together in a false account, that many of them rejoice in any opportunity of detecting each other’s mistakes.

“Now an unlearned man has just the same sort of reason for believing that there are ancient copies, in Hebrew and Greek, of the Christian sacred books, and of the works of other ancient authors, who mention some things connected with the origin of Christianity. There is no need for him to place full confidence in any particular man’s honesty. For if any book were forged by some learned men in these days, and put forth as a translation from an ancient book, there are many other learned men, of this, and of various other countries, and of different religions, who would be eager to make an inquiry, and examine the question, and would be sure to detect any forgery, especially on an important subject.

“And it is the same with translators. Many of these are at variance with each other as to the precise sense of some particular passage; and many of them are very much opposed to each other, as to the doctrines which they believe to be taught in Scripture. But all the different versions of the Bible agree as to the main outline of the history, and of the discourses recorded: and therefore an unlearned Christian may be as sure of the general sense of the original as if he understood the language of it, and

could examine it for himself ; because he is sure that unbelievers, who are opposed to all Christians, or different sects of Christians, who are opposed to each other, would not fail to point out any errors in the translations made by their opponents. Scholars have an opportunity to examine and inquire into the meaning of the original works ; and therefore the very bitterness with which they dispute against each other, proves that where they all agree they must be right.

“ All these ancient books, in short, and all the translations of them, are in the condition of witnesses placed in a witness-box, in a court of justice ; examined and cross-examined by friends and enemies, and brought face to face with each other, so as to make it certain that any falsehood or mistake will be brought to light.”—*Easy Lessons on Christian Evidences*, pp. 23—27.

NOTE (I.) P. 167.

“ WE are often too much disposed, perhaps, not indeed to lay it down, but tacitly to assume, that those who sat at the feet of Apostles must be secure from error. It is more probable that they would hold substantial truth not unmingled with subordinate deviations from it. It was so even during the lifetime of the Apostles, and why not after their decease ? If indeed the good providence of God had not directed the Apostles themselves to bequeath to the Church their own instructions in writing, and we had to gather them only from the writings of their successors, then it might have been hoped that such very important witnesses, as the Apostolical Fathers would have thus become, would have been secured from every mistake, from every error at least which could seriously mislead us. But as it is, there was no more need of a perpetual miracle to give such an immunity from error to the immediate successors of the

Apostles than to us. Moreover, we have an unhappy advantage over them, in that we know by sad experience the fatal consequences which by degrees resulted from even slight deviations from the language and sentiments of Inspiration; such as a sacrificial character gradually ascribed to the Eucharist, or an improper exaltation of the Christian Ministry, or praise allotted upon unscriptural grounds to celibacy or asceticism. If Antiquity, quo propius aberat ab ortu et divinâ progenie, hoc melius ea fortasse, quæ erant vera, cernebat, she may have been for that very reason, knowing what was true, and meaning what was right, the less suspicious of the effect of slight deviations from the exact truth of Holy Scripture. We may lament, indeed, but we cannot be surprised, that uninspired men, holding the truth substantially both as to doctrine and discipline, should slide into error here and there in tone, or sentiment, or subordinate opinion. Doubtless their errors should be our warning. Only let us be careful to detect the seeds of error even in the writings of good and holy men in primitive times, not in order to censure them, but to secure ourselves; to counteract our natural tendency to confound the uninspired with the inspired, and to make us doubly grateful that God has blessed His Church with the unerring records, written by inspired Apostles, of Gospel truth.”—*Hawkins’s Sermon on the Ministry of Men*, pp. 41, 42.

NOTE (K.) P. 172.

“ ‘BUT are we then,’ (all Romanists, and some Protestants would ask) ‘to be perpetually wavering and hesitating in our faith?—never satisfied of our own orthodoxy?—always supposing or suspecting that there is something unscriptural in our Creed or in our Worship? We could but be in this condition, if Christ had *not* promised

to be with his Church, “always, even to the end of the world ;”—had *not* declared by his Apostle, that his “Spirit helpeth our infirmities ;” had *not* taught us to expect that where we are “gathered together in his Name, there is He in the midst of us.” Are we to explain away all that Scripture says of spiritual help and guidance ? Or are we to look for a certain *partial and limited* help ;—that the Holy Spirit will secure us from *some* errors, but lead us, or leave us, to fall into others ?

“Such is the statement, the most plausible I can give in a small compass, of the Romish (but not exclusively Romish) argument, which goes to leave no medium between a claim to infallibility on the one hand, and universal hesitation,—absolute Scepticism, on the other. An appeal to the common sense which every one, Romanist or Protestant, exercises on *all but religious* subjects, might be sufficient to prove, from the practice of those very men who use such reasoning, not only its absurdity, but their own conviction of its absurdity. In all matters which do not admit of absolute demonstration, all men, except a few of extravagant self-conceit, are accustomed to regard themselves, or those under whose guidance they act, as fallible ; and yet act, on many occasions,—after they have taken due pains to understand the subject, to ascertain their own competency, and to investigate the particular case before them,—without any distressing hesitation. There are questions in Medicine, in Agriculture, in Navigation, &c. which sensible men, well versed in their respective arts, would decide with sufficient confidence for all practical purposes ; yet without holding themselves to be infallible, but on the contrary always keeping themselves *open* to conviction,—always *on the watch* against error,—attentive to the lessons which observation furnishes,—ready to stand corrected if any argument shall be adduced (however little they may anticipate this) which will convict them of mistake.

“ ‘Yes,’ (it may be replied) ‘all this holds good in

worldly matters ; but in the far more important case of religious concerns, God has graciously promised us spiritual assistance, to “lead us into all truth.” ’

“It is most true that He has. Christ has declared, ‘If any man keep my saying, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him :’— ‘without Me ye can do nothing :’ for ‘if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ;’ and ‘as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’

“But some distinction there must be, between the spiritual guidance granted to the Apostles, which was accompanied by *sensible miracles*, and all that has ever been bestowed, since the cessation of miracles. I do not mean a difference as to the *evidence for the existence* of each ; for both are equally to be believed, if we have faith in the divine promises : but there must be a difference in the character of the divine assistance in the two cases, arising out of the presence, in the one, and the absence, in the other, of sensibly-miraculous attestation. And this difference evidently is, that in the one case, the divine agency is, in each individual instance, *known* ; in the other, *unknown*. If an Apostle adopted any measure, or formed a decision on any doctrine, in consequence of a perceptible admonition from Heaven, he *knew* that he was, in this point, infallibly right. A sincere Christian, in the present day, may be no less truly guided by the same Spirit to adopt a right measure, or form a correct decision ; but he never can *know* this with certainty, before the day of judgment. It is not that spiritual aid is now *withdrawn*, but that it is *imperceptible* ; as indeed its ordinary sanctifying influence *always was*. It is to be known only by its fruits ; of which we must judge by a diligent and candid examination of Scripture, and a careful, humble, self-distrusting exercise of our own fallible judgment.

“It is conceivable, therefore, that an individual or a church, may be, in fact, *free* from error ; but none can ever be (either at the present moment, or in future) *secure* from

error. We are not bound to believe, or to suspect, that any of the doctrines we hold, are erroneous; but we are bound never to feel such a confidence in their correctness, as to shut the door against objection, and to dispense with a perpetual and vigilant examination. Even the fullest conviction that a complete perfection in soundness of doctrine is attainable, has in it nothing of arrogance,—nothing of a presumptuous claim to infallibility, as long as we steadily keep in view, that even one who should have attained this, never can, in this life, be *certain* of it. We are taught, I think, in Scripture, to expect that the pious and diligent student will be assisted by the divine guidance; and that in proportion as he is humble, patient, sincere, and watchfully on his guard against that unseen current of passions and prejudices which is ever tending to drive him out of the right course,—in the same degree will he succeed in attaining all necessary religious truths. But how far he *has* exercised these virtues, or how far he may have been deceiving himself, he never can be certain, till the great day of account. In the mean time, he must *act* on his convictions, as if he were certain of their being correct; he must *examine* and re-examine the grounds of them, as if he suspected them of being erroneous.

“In this it is that great part of our trial in the present life consists: and it is precisely analogous to what takes place in the greater part of temporal concerns. The skilful and cautious navigator keeps his reckoning with care, but yet never so far trusts to that as not to ‘keep a lookout,’ as it is termed, and to take ‘an observation,’ when opportunity offers. There is no risk incurred, from his strongly hoping that his computations will prove correct; provided he never resigns himself to such an indolent reliance on them as to neglect any opportunity of verifying them. The belief, again, whether true or false, that it is possible for a time-keeper to go with perfect exactness, can never mislead any one who is careful to make allowance for the possibility of error in his own, and to compare

it, whenever he has opportunity, with the Dial which receives the light from heaven."—*Essay on Omissions*, pp. 43—49.

NOTE (L.) P. 198.

"IT has been said that the Pope, the Bishops, the Priests, and those who dwell in convents, form the spiritual or ecclesiastical State ; and that the princes, nobles, citizens, and peasants, form the secular state or laity. This is a fine story, truly. Let no one, however, be alarmed at it. All Christians belong to the spiritual State ; and there is no other difference between them than that of the functions they discharge. * * * *

* * If any pious laymen were banished to a desert, and having no regularly-consecrated priest among them, were to agree to choose for that office one of their number, married or unmarried, this man would be as truly a priest as if he had been consecrated by all the bishops in the world. Augustine, Ambrose, and Cyprian, were chosen in this manner. Hence it follows that laity and priests, princes and bishops, or, as they say, the Clergy and the Laity, have, in reality, nothing to distinguish them, but their *functions*. They all belong to the same Estate ; but all have not the same work to perform," &c.—*Luth. Opp.* l. xvii. f. 457, et seq.

It may be needful to add, that if in a Church thus constituted, or in any other, the *Laity* are admitted to a share in the government of it, and to ecclesiastical offices, this would be, not only allowable, but wise and right. That laymen,—that is, those who hold no *spiritual* office—should take part in legislating for the Church, and should hold *ecclesiastical* offices, as in the Scotch Kirk, and in the American Episcopalian Church, (always supposing, however, that they are MEMBERS of the Church ; not, as in this Country, belonging to other Communions) is far better

than that the whole government should be in the hands of men of one Profession, the clerical.

That this has nothing of an *Erastian* character, it would be unnecessary to mention, but that I have seen the observation—in itself perfectly true—made in such a manner as to imply what is not true; *i. e.* so as to imply that some persons do, or may, maintain that there is something of Erastianism in such an arrangement. But who ever heard of any such charge being brought? Who, for instance, ever taxed the Scotch Kirk, or the American-Episcopalian, with being Erastian, on account of their having Lay-Elders? Erastianism has always been considered as consisting in making the *State as such*,—the *Civil Magistrate by virtue of his office*,—prescribe to the People what they shall believe, and how worship God.

NOTE (M.) P. 224.

WITH respect to the first question (in reference to lay-baptism) it is plain that, according to the above principles, a Church has a right to admit, or refuse to admit, Members. This right it possesses as a *Society*: as a *Christian Society*, sanctioned by our Heavenly Master, it has a right to administer his Sacraments; and it has a right to decide who shall or shall not exercise certain functions, and under what circumstances. If it permit Laymen (that is, those who are excluded from *other* spiritual functions) to baptize, it does, by that permission, *constitute* them its functionaries, in respect of that particular point. And this it has a right to do, or to refuse to do. If a Church refuse to recognise as valid any baptism not administered by such and such officers, then the pretended administration of it by any one else, is of course null and void, as wanting that sanction of a Christian Church which alone can confer validity.

With respect to the second question, it does appear to

me extremely unadvisable,—derogatory to the dignity of the ordinance,—and tending both to superstition and to profaneness, that the admission, through a Divinely-instituted Rite, of members into the Society, should be in any case entrusted to persons not expressly chosen and solemnly appointed to any office in that Society.

Nearly similar reasoning will apply, I think, to the case of Ordinations. What appears to me the wisest course, would be that each Church should require a distinct appointment *by that Church* itself, to any ministerial office to be exercised therein; whether the person so appointed had been formerly ordained or not, to any such office in *another* Church. But the form of this appointment need not be such as to cast any stigma on a former Ordination, by implying that the person in question had *not* been a real and regular minister of *another* distinct Society. For any Church has a fair right to demand that (unless reason be shown to the contrary) its acts should be regarded as valid within the pale of that Church itself: but no Church can reasonably claim a right to ordain ministers for *another* Church.

As for the remaining question,—What is the actual determination as to this point,—*this* is of course a distinct question in reference to each Church.

On this point it is only necessary to remark how important it is, with a view to good order and peace, that *some* determination should be made, and should be clearly set forth, by any Church, as to this and other like practical questions; and that they should not be left in such a state of uncertainty as to furnish occasion for disputing and scruples.^b Many points of *doctrine*, indeed, that may fairly be regarded as non-essential, it may be both allowable and wise for a Church to leave at large, and pronounce no decision on them; allowing each Minister, if he thinks fit, to put forth his own exposition, *as* the result of his own

^b See "Appeal on behalf of Church-government."

judgment, and not as a decision of the Church. But it is not so, in matters even intrinsically indifferent, where Church-discipline is concerned. A Minister ought to be as seldom as possible left in the predicament of *not knowing what he ought to do* in a case that comes before him. And though it is too much to expect from a Church composed of fallible men that its decisions on every point should be such as to obtain universal *approbation*, as the very best, it is but fair to require that it should at least *give* decisions, according to the best judgment of its Legislators, on points which, in each particular case that arises, *must* be decided in one way or another.

That so many points of this character should in our own Church be left in a doubtful state, is one out of the many evils resulting from the want of a Legislative Government for the Church : which for more than a century has had none,^c except the Civil Legislature ; a Body as unwilling, as it is unfitted, to exercise any such functions. Such certainly was not the state of things designed or contemplated by our Reformers ; and I cannot well understand the consistency of those who are perpetually eulogizing the Reformers, their principles and proceedings, and yet so completely run counter to them in a most fundamental point, as to endeavour to prevent, or not endeavour to promote, the establishment of a Church government ; which no one can doubt *they* at least regarded as a thing essential to the well-being, if not to the permanent existence, of a Church.^d

I have never heard any thing worth notice urged on the opposite side, except the apprehension that such a Church-government as would be probably appointed would be likely

^c See "Case of Occasional Days and Prayers," by John Johnson, A. M., Vicar of Cranbrook, in the Diocese of Canterbury.

^d See "Speech on presenting a Petition from the Diocese of Kildare, with Appendix," reprinted in a volume of Charges and other Tracts.

to be *objectionable*;—would probably be a *bad* one. I have no doubt of this; if by “bad” be meant, *faulty*. In this sense, I am convinced that no government, civil or ecclesiastical, ever existed, or will exist, that is not “*bad*.” All governments being formed and administered by fallible men, it would be absurd to look for any that shall be exempt from errors, both in design and in execution. But the important question, and that which alone is really to the present purpose, is, whether it is likely a Government should be established that is *worse* than the absence of government.

Another consideration which ought not to be lost sight of, is, that for any evils which *might* be produced through the fault of Legislators, *those Legislators* would be *responsible*; while for the evils (not, which *may* arise, but which are *actually existing*, notorious, and grievous,) caused by the *want* of a Legislature, every Prelate, every Minister, and every Member of the Church is responsible, who has it in his power to do any thing—much or little—towards the remedy of that want, and neglects to do his utmost.

I will take the liberty of concluding this note with the words of Bishop Bloomfield, in a Charge delivered about seven years ago. “It is undoubtedly incumbent upon us to do all in our power to render the Established Church efficient in the highest possible degree, . . . and if, as I am persuaded is the case, changes can be made” (he is here speaking of Church property) “with perfect safety to the Establishment itself, I hope we shall not be deterred from adopting them by the unreasonable clamours of our adversaries, nor by the hasty and officious zeal of some of our friends. Let us rather be desirous of making those well-considered and salutary amendments which may take away from the one an occasion of cavil and reproach, and satisfy the reasonable wants of the other in a manner consistent with the stability and honour of the Church. We shall do wisely, I think, in availing ourselves of a respite

from imminent danger, to go round our bulwarks, and mark the defects thereof, with a view to their restoration ; and to place our outworks at least in a state of defence, even though the citadel itself may need no substantial repair. It is true that nothing we can do in the way of reform will appease our enemies : . . . but something should be done to satisfy our own conscience. . . . During the last few years a great variety of projects have been laid before the Public for alterations in the discipline and formularies of our Church. So great indeed has been the variety, that it has afforded a plausible ground for arguing, that, as it will be impossible to satisfy all who are desirous of change, we need not attempt to satisfy *any*. It cannot be necessary that I should point out to you the fallacy of such a mode of arguing. What is reasonable, and salutary, and safe, we should admit, though it may be claimed but by a few. What is extravagant, or hazardous, we should resist, though clamoured for by multitudes. . . . If I were asked what my own opinion is, as to the expediency of attempting any alteration in the Liturgy, I should be deficient in candour and truth, if I did not acknowledge that I think our Liturgy susceptible of improvement. It would be little short of a miracle were it otherwise ; and I know not why I should be ashamed or reluctant to avow an opinion which was entertained by Sancroft and Tenison, and Wake, and Secker, and Porteus.

THE END.

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